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VETERANS EMPLOYMENT: IMPROVING THE TRANSITION FROM THE BATTLEFIELD TO THE WORKPLACE

HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
UNITED STATES SENATE

ONE HUNDRED TWELFTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

APRIL 13, 2011

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VETERANS EMPLOYMENT: IMPROVING THE TRANSITION FROM THE BATTLEFIELD TO THE WORKPLACE

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 13, 2011

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
Washington, DC.

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:01 a.m., in room 418 of the Russell Senate Office Building, Hon. Patty Murray, chairman of the Committee, presiding.

Present: Senators Murray, Tester, Burr, Brown of Massachusetts and Boozman.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. PATTY MURRAY, CHAIRMAN, U.S. SENATOR FROM WASHINGTON

Chairman MURRAY. Good morning, and welcome to today's hearing. Today we are going to be examining an issue that is very troubling to me and frankly should be more troubling to our Nation as a whole.

The high rate of unemployment for recently separated veterans is an issue that at first glance defies common sense.

Our Nation's veterans are disciplined. They are team players, who have proven they can perform under pressure. They have acquired skills on the battlefield as mechanics, medics, and leaders that should translate into successful careers in the working world. They are eager to achieve and to give back once again.

But despite all that, according to the Department of Labor statistics from just last month, over 27 percent of veterans ages 20 to 24 were unemployed. That is, over one in five of our Nation's heroes cannot find a job to support their family, do not have an income that provides stability, and do not have work that provides them with the self-esteem and pride that is so critical to their transition back home.

How can that be? How can these young men and women who have performed so admirably, who know how to lead and know how to execute, be struggling so much?

To begin with, one thing we have to recognize is that for many of our young veterans, the civilian working world is a new experience. For many young veterans, the first job they apply for when they return home is often the first civilian job they have ever applied for. These veterans need help translating the skills they have developed in the military into skills that civilian employers can understand. They need direction on what employers are looking for,

and they need to know what job resources are available to them as veterans.

I believe that we can and should do more to not only prepare these veterans for meaningful civilian employment, but also to make the critical connections they need to land a job. For me, much of this effort begins with Labor's Transition Assistance Program (TAP), which should be the cornerstone to finding meaningful employment for young veterans. Yet the TAP program is only mandatory for the U.S. Marine Corps, and, as it stands right now, it is not as good as it can be. It needs to be customized, it needs to be updated, and it needs to be delivered in a way that is relevant and, most importantly, accepted by servicemembers.

We can no longer afford for TAP to be seen as the last step in a servicemember's enlistment. It has to be seen as the first step in their successful career. We also need to improve efforts to translate skills from the battlefield on to a resume and into an interview with the prospective employer.

Too often what a servicemember has done in the military doesn't really seem to count in the civilian workforce and even more often, it is just not recognized. We need to make sure that veterans are talking about their skills in a language that employers understand, and we also need to recognize that many States are not accepting the skills veterans learned in service, often times sending them into a certification process that is riddled with red tape.

I also believe the Federal Government could be doing more to hire veterans and to make sure they are getting the hiring preference that is already in law. In fact, a young disabled Iraq veteran on my own staff has had an issue with a government hiring official who did not understand veterans preference.

The government needs to be getting this right.

For some time now, I have traveled throughout my homestate and talked to veterans about these and other employment challenges. What these veterans have told me has been eye opening and should be a call to action for all of us on this Committee. I have had veterans tell me that they no longer write the fact that they are a veteran on their resume because they fear the stigma they believe that employers attach to invisible wounds of war.

I have heard from medics who return home from treating battlefield wounds who cannot get certifications to be an EMT or to even drive an ambulance. I have talked to veteran after veteran who has said they did not have to go through the TAP program, or that it just was not taken seriously when they did. I have heard from employers who say veterans do not use the vernacular of the business world to describe the benefits of their experience.

These stories are heartbreaking, and they are frustrating. But more than anything, they are a reminder that we have to act now. Our economy is beginning to turn around. We have seen very encouraging signs that employers are hiring, and the unemployment rate among the general population is beginning to subside. We cannot leave our Nation's veterans behind.

We cannot continue to pat veterans on their back for their service and then push them out into the job market alone when they come home. It is time to take real and comprehensive steps to put our veterans back to work. That is why I am planning to aggres-

sively pursue legislation to help our veterans make a successful transition from military service to the working world.

This hearing is a critical step to informing that legislation and I hope that all of you who are here today are open and honest about the challenges that we face and what you believe needs to be done. I look forward to working with all of my colleagues on this Committee on this legislation and making every effort to improve results for our Nation's transitioning servicemembers and veterans.

I want to thank all of our witnesses for being here today. I look forward to hearing from you shortly, but at this time, I am going to turn it over to Senator Burr for his opening statement.

STATEMENT OF HON. RICHARD BURR, RANKING MEMBER, U.S. SENATOR FROM NORTH CAROLINA

Senator BURR. Madam Chairman, good morning and thank you to all of our witnesses for being here for what I think is an important hearing.

As we will discuss today, a wide range of efforts are underway by both the private sector and the government to help veterans find good jobs.

There are employment workshops for servicemembers getting ready to leave the military, Web sites where veterans can post resumes, search for job openings and learn tips for jobs searches, personnel at one-stop career centers around our country dedicated to serving veterans, and much, much more.

Despite those efforts, the unemployment rate for young veterans reached over 27 percent in February 2011, much higher than the non-veterans of that age. Veterans overall had an unemployment rate of 9 percent.

These troubling statistics suggest that many veterans may not be receiving the information services and support they need to find meaningful jobs after leaving the military service. That is why last month Members of this Committee in a bipartisan letter questioned the effectiveness of employment programs for veterans and committed to look at whatever we needed to as far as changes.

In my view, two recent reports from the GAO provide a good starting point for those efforts. Here is what the GAO found: in Fiscal Year 2009, the Federal Government spent $18 billion on 47 separate employment and training programs run by nine different agencies. Geez, this sounds eerily familiar to some other studies that have come out.

All but three of those programs overlapped with at least one other program and five programs that specifically targeted veterans provided seven similar types of services. GAO noted that the overlap among programs might interfere with individuals seeking services and frustrate employers.

On top of that, GAO found a lack of information about the effectiveness of the programs. Most, including those serving veterans, had not completed studies to see whether positive employment outcomes result from their services rather than from other factors. And three programs, including the Transition Assistance Program, did not track any outcome measures. Let me say that again: did not track any outcome measures.

Madam Chairman, all of this suggests that in trying to improve employment assistance for veterans, we should start by figuring out which programs are working well and which are not. Also, we need to look at whether reducing overlap could make these services more effective and obviously more efficient. These common sense steps could save taxpayers money and more importantly, make long-term improvements in services for our Nation's veterans.

In the near term, we should take other steps to bring down the staggering unemployment rate among some groups of veterans. That is why I joined several of my colleagues in introducing the Veterans Employment Transition Act of 2011, which would provide tax incentives to employers to hire veterans who have recently separated from the military. This should provide another reason for employers to take advantage of the valuable skills veterans develop while serving our Nation.

Also, more should be done so that those skills can easily translate into civilian occupations. As we will hear today, the men and women of the military can spend years honing their skills in a particular trade only to find out that they have to start over with training, testing, and certification before the civilian labor market recognizes that skill. Improving this situation should be a priority.

Finally, I want to acknowledge that many employers in North Carolina and around the Nation are doing their part by actively recruiting veterans into their organizations. These efforts play a key role in helping our Nation's heroes smoothly transition back to civilian life, and I encourage more employers in this country to follow their lead.

Madam Chairman, I thank you for calling this hearing on a very important topic, and I look forward to working with you and our other colleagues to make sure that veterans will not struggle to find good jobs as they return and separate from the military.

Thank you.

Chairman MURRAY. Thank you very much, Senator Burr. Look forward to working with you on this.

Senator Brown, do you have an opening statement this morning?

STATEMENT OF HON. SCOTT P. BROWN,
U.S. SENATOR FROM MASSACHUSETTS

Senator BROWN OF MASSACHUSETTS. Thank you, Madam Chair. I will be brief. I want to hear the testimonies of everyone. I also want to make sure that veterans are given the tools and resources they need to find jobs. As a member of the National Guard, I am familiar with the stereotypes held by employers. It is a shaky economy. People have fears that hiring a veteran is just too risky.

I spoke with Admiral McCreary yesterday at length about what he and others are doing, and I look forward to the testimony to find a way to move forward trying to get our heroes employed. In the Guard and Reserve I know the number is very, very high. In the active Army, there are ways we can do it better to get them assimilated right after they get through their military service.

I want to thank you all for coming to testify.

Madam Chairman, thank you for holding this hearing.

Chairman MURRAY. Thank you very much. We will now turn to our first panel for testimony this morning, and we are very pleased

to have all of you here. I want to thank you for your testimony. I look forward to it.

First of all, we have OIF veteran Garett Reppenhagen, the director of Veterans Development from Veterans Green Jobs, who will be followed by Eric Smith, also an OIF veteran. He represents the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America. After that, we will have Admiral T.L. McCreary, president of Military.com, and then Michael Yauger, president of the Teamsters Local Union 786 and coordinator for the International Brotherhood of Teamsters' "Helmets to Hardhats" and "Heroes to Health Care" programs.

So really again, I appreciate all of you being here. Mr. Reppenhagen, we will begin with you.

STATEMENT OF GARETT REPPENHAGEN, DIRECTOR OF VETERANS DEVELOPMENT, VETERANS GREEN JOBS

Mr. REPPENHAGEN. Thank you very much.

Chairman Murray, Ranking Member Burr, distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for inviting me on behalf of my organization, Veterans Green Jobs, to testify today on the important topic of veterans needs, and employment. Thank you for your tireless efforts in helping those who dedicated their lives to service.

My name is Garett Reppenhagen. I grew up a son of a career Army father who was a Vietnam War veteran. Both my grandfathers are World War II veterans. Service runs in my family. It is a family tradition. I served from 2001 to 2005 in the U.S. Army as a calvary scout and a sniper. I was deployed to Kosovo and then Iraq.

As I transitioned from service from the military to civilian, I joined a demographic that is basically prone to unemployment, mental health injury, substance abuse, homelessness, incarceration and suicide. Due to these factors, after being honorably discharged in 2005, I actively have been involved in employment issues for veterans, particularly those of my generation of the post-9/11 era.

Veterans Green Jobs is a national 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation. We are headquartered in Denver, Colorado. We have existed since 2008. We are a young organization. Our mission is to engage in transition and connect military veterans with meaningful employment opportunities that serve our communities and environment.

We work to inspire hope and confidence in our veterans for a positive future for themselves and inspire them to rejoin our communities and have healthy family lives. Our vision is to empower veterans to utilize the military service to become leaders in a new mission that helps our Nation achieve energy efficiency, energy independence and security, national resources conservation and resulting in environmental, social and economic benefits.

We direct our efforts to building programs that offer veterans concrete skill building and job placement. We view unemployment as a risk multiplier. For all the obstacles our veterans face, the lack of stable careers, which provide veterans with a purpose and a sense of balance, compounds problems with veteran health care, personal relationships and other issues veterans face. These act as a roadblock to reintegrating in our communities.

We are dedicated to helping all veterans transition into successful career pathways by focusing on opportunities in stable economic sectors related to the green economy, to include energy efficiency, weatherization, clean and renewable energies, natural resource conservation, environmental restoration and other green sectors.

In some cases veterans receive training in military occupational specialities that translate to immediate openings in green-job sectors; however, most need further training and education through community colleges, universities, apprenticeships and on-the-job training.

We encourage veterans we work with to pursue other pathways toward employment. We strongly believe that job opportunities in these sectors will increase and that veterans will be trained and positioned to assume these jobs. Private business has a significant role to play in assisting veterans in transition from the battlefield to the workforce.

Veterans Green Jobs directs a number of transition-to-employment programs to support these goals in partnership with government, business, and education. We currently directly employ 26 veterans full time on our staff in our weatherization programs. Our weatherization program is a partnership through the Colorado Governor's Energy Office and provides residential weatherization for low-income families.

Veterans in this program receive a full wage and extensive training and certifications.

Additionally, we are assisting 100 veterans this year in our Veterans Green Corps and our Veteran Fire Corps. These programs exist in six western States in cooperation with the U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, and Conservation Corps. The program provides eight to 22 weeks of paid on-the-ground training programs for veterans to perform wildfire mitigation, trail clearing, and wildland fire fighting on Federal lands.

Many of these programs are assisted and funded by the Corporation of National Community Service, AmeriCorps. The support of AmeriCorps leverages funding with the Federal land management agencies that contribute, creating a win-win situation, which makes it affordable for small regional offices to utilize these programs to get work done on our Federal lands.

We also have 15 veterans who participated in Veterans Green Jobs' training academy program in Bucks Community College near Philadelphia. This program will expand this year to include technical training and job placement in the wind-energy sector.

In cooperation with Gamesa Wind USA, a large energy firm with facilities on the east coast, this program is an outstanding example of a program that provides technical training directly linked to a real job.

We look for veterans with particular military occupational specialties, then recruit and interview them. They are hired by Gamesa before the program starts. Bucks County Community program trains those veterans, graduates them, and they move directly into full-time employment. All of our programs represent boots-on-the-ground for putting veterans back to work. As a nonprofit, our success has been accomplished by partnering with a

wide array of government, private and non-profit entities. We have developed an array of formal partnerships and teaming agreements with businesses, community colleges, 4-year educational institutions and non-profits.

Additionally, our efforts have been supported through charitable giving that includes Walmart Foundation, Sierra Club, and the Call of Duty Endowment. However, as a non-profit, we struggle to sustain these viable programs for veterans because of the downturn in the economy. It has directly impacted charitable giving, both corporate and individual, and other sources of funding.

In executing our programs over the last 3 years, we've learned a great deal about employment issues facing our veterans. There are numerous organizations and public offices in the space of veteran support and advocacy. What often sets Veterans Green Jobs apart is our ability to build partnerships that offer holistic employment assistance linkages from training and education to direct job placement by working with both veterans and employers.

In our experiences, the programs with the greatest success in serving veterans have incorporated these following elements: a sense of service that positively impacts veterans because they gain a sense of pride and accomplishment that transforms their military service into national and community service; a living wage and stipend that allows veterans to support themselves and their families with some income while earning certifications and training to prepare them for civilian employment; direct connection with job placement as a result of training and education; well communicated resources that are easy to locate and access; and personal guidance that helps individual veterans find training and careers based on their experience and interest.

Our experiences have also taught us that some elements do not provide notable benefits, including: so-called one-stop shops; Web sites with numerous lists and web-based hot links; resume banks that only offer standard competitive job searches with no additional resources or services; training with no prospective or direct employment on the other end linked to a specific employer; shallow employment opportunities and part-time work at a low wage that are not viewed as meaningful careers; and disconnected services focusing on one aspect of veterans' needs that do not communicate with other organizations or offices.

Promoting veteran employment from the battlefield to the workforce is making a commitment to connect private, public, and nonprofit partnerships to build comprehensive programs. In this day and age, our capacities for a lot of our programs are very low and by uniting these partnerships we are able to multiply our growth in the amount of veterans we serve.

Some of the suggestions that I want to make to the Committee to enhance our workforce opportunities for veterans returning from military service are the following: one, convene immediately a national-level workshop, engaging leaders in government, business and non-profit sectors to address solutions to current veterans employment issues.

This is not a workshop that identifies the issues. We already know the issues. This is a workshop that defines concrete solutions, successful models, and funding sources for those programs.

Two, develop promotional materials targeted to both business industry and returning veterans that identifies skills by military occupational specialty and their translation to civilian occupations.

Three, encourage all States to pass legislation that allows veterans to receive in-state tuition rates. As an example, Colorado has passed a G.I. Promise Bill, which affords these rates to all veterans returning to public institutions inside the State of Colorado.

Develop federally-funded grant opportunities to create veteran-based environmental restoration, remediation crews to assist in brown field restoration, mining reclamation, oil spill habitat restoration, specifically on our coastline, and other environmental cleanup needs. This would include new legislation that establishes a revolving fund from taxpayer return checkoffs for veterans to work in these areas.

Develop guidelines and policy measures that expand Corporation for National Community Service—the AmeriCorps Veteran Corps model—to provide national service leadership opportunities to returning veterans at a livable wage. Take into account the unique veteran demographic with creating national initiatives that target specific age groups. For example, Job Corps and America's Great Outdoors Initiative both target veterans and youth, but because of this dual nature they are trying to only recruit veterans under the age of 25.

Provide government incentives to residential and health care sectors to enhance the role of veterans in providing energy efficiency and weatherization of senior care communities in concert with EPA Energy Star ratings and initiatives.

Develop clear communication and guidelines to education and training providers about the post-9/11 G.I. Bill's ability to support veterans in non-accredited certification and training.

There are a lot of trainers who do not realize the benefit of the G.I. Bill and have not looked into their State certification of becoming a training program for the G.I. Bill.

Chairman Murray, Veterans Green Jobs is a national non-profit corporation dedicated to green sector employment for veterans. We are fully aware of the urgency of the problems facing our veterans as they exit military service and return to our communities. Our board of directors, chief executive officer and non-profit staff are composed of professionals, both veteran and non-veteran, who are dedicated to partnering with others in creative and productive ways to place veterans into meaningful opportunities.

This concludes my statement. I will be glad to take any questions you have. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Reppenhagen follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF GARETT REPPENHAGEN, OIF VETERAN, DIRECTOR OF VETERANS DEVELOPMENT, VETERANS GREEN JOBS

INTRODUCTION

Chairman Murray, Ranking Member Burr and Distinguished Members of the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs: Thank you for inviting me on behalf of my organization, Veterans Green Jobs, to testify today on the important topic of employment needs of veterans and thank you for your tireless efforts in helping us who dedicated our lives to service to this country. My name is Garret Reppenhagen. I grew up as the son of a career Army father who was a Vietnam War combat veteran. Both my grandfathers served in WWII. Military service is a family tradition.

I am an Army veteran who served on active duty from 2001–2005 with the 1st Infantry Division as a cavalry scout and sniper, to include tours in Kosovo and Iraq. As I transitioned from servicemember to civilian I have joined my fellow veterans in a demographic that is prone to unemployment, mental health injuries, substance abuse, homelessness, incarceration, and suicide. Due to these factors, since being Honorably Discharged in 2005, I have actively been involved with employment issues for our military veterans, particularly those of my generation who served in the post-9/11 combat era.

VETERANS GREEN JOBS ORGANIZATION

Veterans Green Jobs is a national 501(c)3 nonprofit corporation, headquartered in Denver, Colorado, that has existed since 2008. Our mission is to engage, transition, and connect military veterans with meaningful employment opportunities that serve our communities and environment. We work to inspire hope and confidence in our veterans for a positive future for themselves, their families and their communities. Our vision is to empower veterans to utilize their military service to become leaders in a new mission that helps our Nation achieve energy efficiency, energy independence and security, natural resources conservation and the resulting environmental, social and economic benefits. We direct our efforts to building programs that offer veterans concrete skill building and job placement. We view unemployment as a risk multiplier for all other obstacles a veteran faces. The lack of a stable career, which provides a veteran with a sense of purpose, compounds problems with healthcare, personal relationships, and other issues, and acts as a road block to successful reintegration into our communities.

We are dedicated to helping all veterans' transition into successful career paths by focusing on opportunities in stable economic sectors related to the green economy, to include energy efficiency and weatherization, clean and renewable energy, natural resources conservation, environmental restoration and other green sectors. In some cases veterans have received training in their military occupational specialties that translate to immediate openings in the green job sector. However, most need further training and education through community colleges, universities and apprenticeship or on-the-job programs. We encourage the veterans we work with to pursue these pathways toward employment. We strongly believe the job opportunities in these sectors will increase, and that veterans can be trained and positioned to assume these jobs. Private business has a significant role to play in assisting our veterans in transitioning from the battlefield to the workforce. Veterans Green Jobs directs a number of transition and employment programs to support these goals in partnership with government, business and higher education.

VETERANS GREEN JOBS PROGRAMS

We currently directly employ 26 veterans full-time on our staff and in our weatherization programs. Our weatherization program, in partnership with the Colorado Governor's Energy Office, provides residential weatherization for low-income families. Veterans in this program receive a full wage and extensive training and certifications. Additionally, we are assisting over 100 veterans this year in our Veterans Green Corps and Veterans Fire Corps training and transition programs in six western states, in cooperation with the U.S. Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the National Park Service and the Conservation Corps in these regions. This program provides an 8–22 week paid, on the ground training program for veterans to perform wildland fire mitigation, trail clearing and wildland fire fighting on Federal lands. Many of these programs are assisted by funding from the Corporation for National Community Service—AmeriCorps. The support from AmeriCorps leverages funding that the Federal land management agencies contribute, creating a win-win whereby veterans receive training while accomplishing important hazardous fuels and conservation projects on public lands.

Also, we have 15 veterans who have participated in a Green Jobs Academy training program in cooperation with Bucks County Community College near Philadelphia. This program will expand this year to include technician training and direct job placement in the wind energy sector, in cooperation with Gamesa Wind USA, a large wind energy firm, with facilities on the East Coast. This program is an outstanding example of a program that provides technical training directly linked to a real job. With assistance from Veterans Green Jobs, veterans with technical Military Occupational Specialties are being recruited, interviewed and hired by Gamesa, then directly placed in the Bucks County Community program for training, and then graduated into full-time jobs.

All of our programs represent "boots on the ground" for putting veterans back to work. As a non-profit, our successes have been accomplished by partnering with a

wide array of government, private and nonprofit entities. We have developed an array of formal partnerships and teaming agreements with businesses, community colleges, 4-year educational institutions and other non-profits. Additionally, our efforts have been supported through charitable giving, to include the Walmart Foundation, the Sierra Club Foundation and the Call of Duty Endowment. However, as a non-profit we struggle to sustain these viable programs for veterans because of the down-turn in the economy which has directly impacted charitable giving, both corporate and individual, and other sources of funding.

FACTORS AFFECTING EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION OF VETERANS

In executing our programs over the past three years we have learned a great deal about the employment issues facing veterans. There are numerous organizations and public offices in the space of veterans support and advocacy. What often sets Veterans Green Jobs apart is our ability to build partnerships that offer holistic employment assistance and linkages from training and education to direct job placement—by working with both veterans and the employers.

In our experiences, the programs with the greatest successes in serving veterans have incorporated the following elements:

- A sense of service that positively impacts veterans because they gain a sense of pride and accomplishment that transforms their military service into other forms of national and community service
- A living wage or stipend that allows veterans to support themselves and their families with some income while earning certifications and training to prepare them for civilian employment
- A direct connection with job placement as a result of training or education
- Well communicated resources that are easy to locate and access
- Personal guidance that helps individual veterans find training and careers based on their experience and interests

Our experiences have also taught us that some elements do not provide notable benefit, to include:

- So-called "one stop shops" or Web sites with numerous lists and web-based hotlinks
- Resume banks that only offer standard competitive job searches
- Training with no prospective or direct employment at the other end that is linked to a specific employer
- Shallow employment opportunities and part-time work at a low wage that are not viewed as meaningful careers
- Disconnected services focusing on one aspect of veterans' needs that do not communicate with other organizations or offices

PROMOTING VETERAN EMPLOYMENT FROM THE BATTLEFIELD TO THE WORKFORCE

In making some suggestions to the Committee about how you can assist in enhancing the workforce opportunities for our veterans returning from military service over the past decade, we offer the following:

1. Convene immediately a national level workshop, engaging leaders in government, business and the non-profit sectors, to address solutions to current veteran employment issues. This workshop should be directed not toward defining and researching the problem, but rather to defining concrete solutions, successful models and funding sources.
2. Develop promotional materials targeted to both business-industry and returning veterans that identify skills by Military Occupational Specialty and their translation to civilian occupations.
3. Encourage all States to pass legislation that allows veterans to receive in-state tuition rates. As an example, Colorado has passed the GI Promise Bill which affords these rates to all veterans returning to public institutions in the State.
4. Develop federally funded grant opportunities to create veteran-based environmental restoration and remediation crews to assist in brown field restoration, mining reclamation, oil spill habitat restoration, and other environmental cleanup needs. This could include new legislation that establishes a revolving fund from a taxpayer return check-off for veterans to work in these areas.
5. Develop guidelines and policy measures that expand the Corporation for National Service-AmeriCorps Veterans Corps model to provide national service leadership opportunities to returning veterans at a livable wage.
6. Take into account the unique veteran demographic when creating national initiatives that target specific age groups (e.g., JobCorps and American Great Outdoors Initiative).

7. Provide government incentives to the residential and health care sectors to enhance the role of veterans in providing energy efficiency and weatherization of senior care communities, in concert with EPA Energy Star ratings and initiatives.
8. Develop clear communication and guidelines to education and training providers about the Post-9/11 GI Bill's ability to support veterans in non-credited certification and training programs.

CONCLUSION

Chairman Murray, Veterans Green Jobs is a national nonprofit corporation dedicated to green sector employment for veterans. We are fully aware of the urgency of the problems facing our veterans as they exit military service and return to our communities. Our Board of Directors, Chief Executive Officer and non-profit staff are composed of professionals, both veteran and non-veteran, who are dedicated to partnering with others in creative and proactive ways to place veterans into meaningful employment to the benefit of themselves, their families and their communities. This concludes my statement. I will be glad to answer your questions.

Chairman MURRAY. Thank you very much, Mr. Repenhagen.
Mr. Smith.

STATEMENT OF ERIC SMITH, MEMBER VETERAN, IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN VETERANS OF AMERICA

Mr. SMITH. Madam Chairwoman, Ranking Member Burr and Members of the Committee, happy Monday, and I thank you all for inviting me to share my experiences today as a combat veteran struggling to find employment in this difficult economy.

My name is Eric Smith. I served in the U.S. Navy for 5½ years as a hospital corpsman. I deployed twice to Iraq. During my tours I gained valuable experience in the medical field under the most extreme conditions imaginable.

In spite of my experience and service, I am struggling to find a job today. I am not alone.

Although mine is just one story, I know that my experiences are mirrored in the over 200,000 Iraq and Afghanistan veterans who are struggling to find work in today's economy.

As a Navy corpsman, I carried enormous responsibility and acquired a wide range of technical and leadership skills that in a perfect world would translate into a good job in the civilian workforce. I enlisted at 17. By age 19, I had skills, training and responsibilities far beyond those of my civilian peers in the medical field. As a senior corpsman, I managed a four-man team for a 20-plus bed ICU and performed procedures that only the most experienced civilian nurses were trained to perform, again, the most experienced civilian nurses.

During my deployment to Iraq, I served as the primary corpsman for an infantry platoon with the 3rd Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment, who is actually getting back from their deployment in Afghanistan this week. I performed duties that in a civilian world are normally left to a physician's assistant. In this capacity, my medical and leadership training were beyond reproach.

With my hard-earned experience, I was more than confident that upon returning home from Iraq I could find an excellent job doing well what I had done for my entire enlistment. I was honorably discharged in 2008. I strongly believed that I left with an impressive resume that would translate well into the civilian market. However, it has not proven to be the case and that is why I am here this morning.

In 2009, I applied for a job at a local hospital as a—rather a certified nursing assistant.

Again, my resume was extensive. My experience throughout various and differing medical disciplines and procedures, what have you, it impressed the nurses, the three nurses that I was interviewing for. They were blown away by not only my youth, but the experience I had amassed during that time.

They recommended me to the doctors in charge.

I mean, I was more than confident that I had this job in the bag. I did not get a call back. You know, as it is often said, you know, almost to the point of nausea even, hindsight is 20/20. In looking back, I am almost positive that despite my knowledge and my experience I did not get the job because I did not have a piece of paper saying so, that civilian certification saying that I was able to do this by law. Everything else on that resume, it was hearsay, even though it was 100 percent true.

So I was disappointed by that. But I was more frustrated by the fact that despite my graduation from high school to corps school and years worth of experience provided to me, I did not get that certification out of hospital corps school. That made me less competitive than my less experienced civilian peers.

My experience is mirrored across the services.

Far too many combat corpsman are becoming highly skilled in their trade, yet high operational tempo and multiple deployments prevent them from obtaining equivalent civilian certifications. Quite frankly, we are not setting our veterans up for success.

While assigned to the Marine Corps, I attended the Transition Assistance Program before leaving the service and again, as you said, Madam Chairwoman, it is mandatory in the Marine Corps. One thing, about the only thing I retained from TAPs class was that I was told that my veteran status and my experience will put me ahead of the pack when I got out. In fact—no, despite that, I do not think that I am on a level playing field with my civilian peers.

In the military, I was more than qualified for the positions that I applied for in the civilian workforce. As a civilian, however, my military education and training did not translate because I did not have, again, that piece of paperwork saying so. The resume that I thought would put me ahead of the pack in my opinion put me far behind. Today, several years later, I am struggling to find a job and utilize the skills that the Navy spent over $1 million and nearly 6 years giving me.

Unfortunately, my story is not unique, nor is it limited to veterans seeking work in the medical field. There are thousands, thousands, of highly skilled veterans with training far beyond that of their civilian peers that cannot seek equivalent employment outside of the military.

Additionally, the leadership and management skills that veterans have obtained in combat are being overlooked by a civilian workforce that does not understand their experience. As an Iraq veteran and proven health care provider, I am unable to continue in that capacity right now without going back to school to relearn what the Navy already taught me. Additionally, there is no tool currently that employers can use to understand my military re-

sume and vice versa, to translate that my military qualifications into that corporate language. One is desperately needed, as I think we can all agree on.

To find a solution to this issue, I joined Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, or IAVA. Two weeks ago, 27 of my fellow veterans and I came here to Capitol Hill as a part of IAVA's Storm the Hill 2011. Throughout the week, we met with 117 offices, 57 Members of Congress and staff members to ask them to commission a study and report about how the military vocational skills and certifications translate to the civilian world.

If this tool existed, I believe that I would have been able to leverage my military training into gainful civilian employment. If it existed, I believe we also would not be living in a country where Iraq and Afghanistan veterans are consistently unemployed at rates that are 2 percent higher than our civilian peers.

As the civilian unemployment rate declines, joblessness among new veterans continues to skyrocket. It is unacceptable. As a country, we must act now to reverse this trend and uphold the Nation's commitment to our men and women serving in uniform. It is not too late if we act now.

IAVA's 2011 policy agenda lays out a clear path for the public and private sectors to work together to end new veteran unemployment. I am proud of my service and to—rather, I am proud of my service to my country and also the brothers and sisters that I fought beside in Iraq. I am just one man, but my story reflects the struggle of over 200,000 veterans in the current job market.

I am asking you now to show them that you have their backs. Thank you for your time.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Smith follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF ERIC SMITH, MEMBER VETERAN, IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN VETERANS OF AMERICA

Madam Chairwoman, ranking member, and Members of the Committee, thank you for inviting me to share my experiences today as a combat veteran struggling to find employment in this difficult economy.

My name is Eric Smith. I served in the United States Navy as a Hospital Corpsman for 5½ years, deploying twice to Iraq. During my tours, I gained valuable experience in the medical field under the most extreme conditions imaginable. In spite of my experience and service, I'm struggling to find a job today—and I know I am not alone. Although mine is just one story, I know that my experiences are mirrored in the over 200,000 Iraq and Afghanistan veterans who are struggling to find work in today's economy.

As a Navy Corpsman, I carried enormous responsibility and acquired a wide range of technical and leadership skills that should translate into a good job in the civilian workforce. I enlisted in the Navy when I was 17 years old. By age 19, I had skills, training and responsibilities far beyond those of my civilian peers in the medical field. As a senior corpsman, I lead a 4-man team for a 20+ bed ICU, and I performed procedures that only the most experienced civilian nurses were trained to perform.

During my deployment to Iraq, I served as the primary corpsman for an infantry platoon in the 3rd Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment. In a combat zone, a platoon's corpsman is their medical lifeline, performing duties that in the civilian world are normally left to a Physician's Assistant. In this capacity, my medical and leadership training were unparalleled.

With this experience, I was confident that upon returning home from Iraq I could find an excellent job in the medical field. After two tours, I left military service in 2008. I strongly believed I left with an impressive resume that would translate well into the civilian market. This did not prove to be the case.

In 2009, I applied for a job as a Certified Nursing Assistant. By comparison to the high-tempo environment of my combat tour, this was a mundane position—but

I welcomed the opportunity to keep serving in the medical field. My corpsman resume was extensive. My experience in numerous medical disciplines and procedures impressed the three nurses who interviewed me for the position. When they recommended me to the doctors in charge of the clinic, I was confident that I would get the job. However, I never received a call back.

Looking back, I'm almost positive that despite my knowledge and experience, I was ultimately disqualified from the position for lack of civilian equivalent certifications. I was disappointed by this outcome. However, I was more frustrated by the reality that graduation from Naval Hospital Corps school and years worth of experience provided me with no certifications that translated into the civilian world. I was equally frustrated by the lack of a uniform process for acquiring these civilian certifications while in the military. Presently, the Navy has systems in place that offer some opportunities to gain these valued civilian certifications; however, these systems are not standardized and they are largely driven by a Sailor's own initiative. For example, certification is easily attainable for a Corpsman who is assigned to a small command in an outpatient clinic with rigid 9 to 5 hours. He or she can leave work to attend certification courses. It is an entirely different scenario for a corpsman who works 12-hour night shifts at a hospital ward or a "Greenside" Corpsman who is preoccupied with back-to-back combat deployments. The current system is not equitable, nor is it reflective of a sailor's valuable experience and training. In the end, I firmly believe this hurts Navy Corpsmen like myself looking to apply our skills in the civilian medical field. It makes us less competitive than our less experienced civilian peers.

My experience is mirrored across the services. Far too many combat Corpsmen are becoming highly skilled in their trade, yet high operational tempo and multiple deployments prevent them from obtaining equivalent civilian certifications. Quite frankly, we are not setting our veterans up for success.

While assigned to the Marine Corps Forces, I attended the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) before leaving the service. The military allows you to attend the class as far as 12 months out before separation. I did so exactly one year out from my separation date and only weeks away from my second deployment to Iraq. However, as I prepared to deploy for a second tour, much of the valuable information offered in the class was not retained. Many servicemembers were in a similar position. TAP was one less thing to do before we separated and the earlier we did it the better. Why not shorten that window, so that more of the information provided through TAP is retained?

If there was one thing I retained from TAP, it was that I was told my veteran status and military experience would put me ahead of my civilian peers when I transitioned out. I was told I would be wanted in the civilian workforce because I had proven myself a reliable leader. Based on my experience transitioning home, I have not found this to be the case. In fact, I do not feel I am on a level playing field with my civilian peers.

In the military I was more than qualified for the positions I applied for in the civilian workforce. But in the civilian world, my military education and training did not translate because I didn't have a piece of paperwork saying so. The resume that I thought would put me ahead of the pack actually put me behind. Today, several years later, I am still struggling to find a job and utilize the skills that the Navy spent over $1 million and six years to give me.

Unfortunately, my story is not unique nor is it limited to veterans seeking work in the medical field. There are thousands of highly skilled veterans with training far beyond their civilian peers that cannot seek equivalent employment outside of the military. Additionally, the leadership and management skills that veterans have obtained in combat are being overlooked by a civilian workforce that does not understand their experience.

As a veteran, it is difficult to understand why my hard-earned experience in the military is hearsay in the civilian world without required civilian certifications. I have applied to jobs where I supposedly had a 'veteran's preference' to no avail. Posting my resume to sites such as Monster.com and Snag-A-Job.com have proved fruitless. With no other options, in the past year I have sought part-time work as a bartender, mail sorter and flatbed trailer tarper. Still, part-time work has been scarce. I have walked in the early mornings to a 7–11 in Baltimore to be picked up for day labor. Desperate for income, I have also volunteered to be a test patient in drug studies. At one point, I spent over $300 on a round-trip train ticket from Baltimore to Metropark, NJ to enroll in a study, only to be told within minutes that I did not qualify.

The time between separation and your final adjustment to civilian life can be rough and often times very lonely. Save for my father who is a veteran, there are few people who understand the struggles of returning combat veterans. Right now,

there are just too few services to help veterans like myself transfer our military skills to the civilian market. As an Iraq veteran, I have no way of translating my military vocational skills without going back to school to 're-learn' what the Navy already taught me. Additionally, there is no tool that employers can use to understand my military resume and credentials. One is desperately needed.

To find a solution to this issue, I joined Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA). Two weeks ago, 27 of my fellow veterans and I came here to Capitol Hill to ask Congress for its support in solving this problem as part of IAVA's Storm the Hill 2011. Throughout the week, we met with 117 offices and 57 Members of Congress to ask them to commission a study and report about how military vocational skills and certifications translate to the civilian world. If this tool existed, I believe that I would have been able to leverage my military training into gainful civilian employment when I came home from Iraq in 2008. If it existed, I believe we also would not be living in a country where Iraq and Afghanistan veterans are consistently unemployed at rates that are 2 percent higher than our civilian peers.

As the civilian unemployment rate declines, joblessness among new veterans continues to skyrocket—this is unacceptable. As a country, we must act now to reverse this trend and uphold the Nation's commitment to our men and women serving in uniform. In addition to ordering a study, we must make the TAP program mandatory throughout all branches, encourage veterans to start small businesses and promote veteran hiring through tax incentives. It's not too late if we act now. And IAVA's 2011 Policy Agenda lays out a clear path for the public and private sectors to work together to end new veteran unemployment. http://iava.org/policyagenda

I am proud of my service to my country and the brothers and sisters I fought beside in Iraq. I am just one man. But my story reflects the struggle of over 200,000 veterans in the current job market. I am asking you to act now and show them that you have their backs.

POSTHEARING QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. MARK BEGICH TO ERIC SMITH, OIF VETERAN, REPRESENTING IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN VETERANS OF AMERICA

Mr. Smith, IAVA has put forth a number of recommendations to employ our returning veterans.

Question 1. One of the IAVA recommendations is to conduct a study on the similarities and differences between DOD and civilian vocational certifications and licenses to ease the transition of veterans into the civilian workforce. Has there been any action taken on such a study? What would the ideal outcome of such a study be?

Question 2. One of the IAVA recommendations is to create state and local veterans' preference laws for all levels of government hiring and contracting. To what extent is this recommendation being implemented around the Nation?

Question 3. The Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) and Local Veterans' Employment Representatives (LVER) work with employers and veterans and advocate for hiring veterans. Were you aware of these services when you were searching for a job in the medical field following your separation? If so, did you use these services and were they helpful?

[Responses were not received within the Committee's timeframe for publication.]

Chairman MURRAY. Thank you very much, Mr. Smith.

Admiral McCreary?

STATEMENT OF REAR ADMIRAL T.L. MCCREARY, U.S. NAVY (RET.), PRESIDENT OF MILITARY.COM

Admiral MCCREARY. Madam Chairwoman, Ranking Member Burr, Members of the Committee, thank you very much for inviting me to appear today to talk about veteran employment and thank you for your comments about supporting our vets and their needs as they move, particularly as they transition from the service into the workforce.

Military culture, language and job skills are not always understood by civilian employers. Many companies have very little concept of the diverse jobs and valuable skill sets one can learn in the

military. Additionally, our vets are coming out of the service with little experience in writing a civilian resume, no exposure to private sector business culture or language.

As the military looks at reducing end strength, more veterans will be looking for civilian employment while job growth is not accelerated as much as hoped. Given the services these veterans have provided us during war time, we owe them the best support possible in their post-service life.

With the current economy, the budget issues facing our Nation and the need to help our vets reassimilate into the broader workforce, we are really faced with a stark choice of spending more or spending smarter. I think we should spend our taxpayer dollars smart.

To do that, I believe the government should focus on preparing the vet for transition and not duplicate or recreate what exists in the private sector. In accomplishing this, first and foremost military personnel need more exposure to the private sector before they leave the service. That exposure should happen in the form of a transition assistance program where the focus should be on the veteran getting ahead rather than just getting out. It should include specific skill, resume writing services, information on private sector business culture, and hands-on training.

Our young men and women use the internet today all the time and to provide that hands-on training on how to use the online tools and the wide array of tools that already exist out there in great abundance. The vast majorities of companies have very good and generally very efficient ways to find good talent. The key must be to get the veterans out there into that system in front of the employers, be identified as vets, network with others, and compete in the broadest possible job market.

Second, a better understanding of military knowledge, skills and abilities and how they translate into professional certifications should be addressed by the Federal Government with the States.

That a soldier, sailor, airman, Marine or Guardsman can perform surgery on the battlefield, but not be certified in EMT, as Petty Officer Smith here testified, without starting from scratch is just astounding to me. VA, DOD and Labor, along with the 50 States could probably develop a program as to what could be transferred or accepted as certification eligible within all States in a very short testing or accreditation period.

Military.com knows the private sector and with our parent company, Monster.com, we can and do specialize in harnessing the best technology, along with the most effective methods to connect our servicemembers with employment. While most employers do not tell us how many vets they hire, we do know they continually search resumes with veteran status, continually post hundreds of thousands of their positions on Military and Monster.com over and over.

If these efforts were not successful, companies would not continue this practice because they have a vested business interest in getting the right person into the right job. They do this because we have the tools to translate military experience to the commercial world and we do it both on and offline.

Our veteran career center uses a variety of interactive tools and resources. Our skills translator, which decodes military skills into equivalent skill sets, had 250,000 separate visitors in the last year alone using more than 1.5 million pages of that translation process for that population.

The key here though is it is directly linked to a Monster Jobs database where when they type in that skill, civilian equivalent positions are displayed and show immediate openings in that person's skill set. We also feature a veterans career network.

While it is still in beta format for us, it has over a million members who have raised their hand and signed up to offer mentorship and guidance to other transitioning vets.

We also engage with job seekers and job providers through our career expos, sponsored in partnership with the Non-commissioned Officers Association. In 2010, 15,000 members attended our 33 career fair events near military facilities.

Government knows government. The private sector knows the private sector. There needs to be translation between the two cultures and our free assistance to vets help make that happen.

Finally, in today's environment of continual military engagement, we now have to see veterans transition and employment is a rolling responsibility that will remain a permanent fixture on the national landscape. We can do more. We must have a public, private partnership that works.

Thank you for your time. I would be pleased to answer any questions.

[The prepared statement of Admiral McCreary follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF RADM T.L. MCCREARY, USN (RET.),
PRESIDENT OF MILITARY.COM

Madam Chairwoman, Ranking Member Burr, and members of the Subcommittee: Thank you for inviting me to appear before you today to discuss veteran employment.

As a 27-year veteran of the Navy and the current President of Military.com, I have experienced the issue of veteran employment from both sides. As such, I would like to share with you what our organization is doing to help veterans find career opportunities as well as our belief that aligning government and the private sector will best connect our servicemembers with jobs.

Post-WWII our country experienced what can be called the "Golden Age of Higher Education." Armed with their GI Bill benefits, 4.4 million servicemembers went to college to build the foundation for a better life.

While today's veterans and servicemembers in transition are still pursuing their educational dreams with the enhanced GI Bill, a weakened economy makes it tougher to find excellent job opportunities. There is a disconnect with the private sector on the transportability of military skills and our veterans are finding it more difficult than ever to translate their total military experience into a civilian career.

The numbers are disturbing. The unemployment rate for all veterans remains stubbornly at 9%, the unemployment rate for post-9/11 veterans is roughly 11%—higher than the national average. Young male veterans between the ages of 18 to 24 had an unemployment rate of 21.9% in 2010 and female veterans face unemployment at a rate of 13.5%, versus 8.4% for non-veteran women.

Many Americans enter the military because of the opportunity to acquire marketable skills along with the ability for advanced degrees. Yet when the time comes to transition today, they are not finding as much opportunity in today's economy. Worse yet, the connection between unemployment and homelessness is irrefutable. Right now the VA estimates there are over 100,000 veterans who have no home.

The reality is, as we continue to reduce our troop end strength, more veterans will be looking for civilian employment while job growth has not accelerated as much as hoped. Competition will be stiff and we already know that unemployment is higher for veterans than for civilians.

Military culture, language and job skills are not easily translated to the civilian world. Potential employers have very little understanding of the diverse jobs and skill sets one can learn in the military. Additionally, our veterans are coming out of the service with little experience in writing a civilian resume and no exposure to private sector business culture or language.

There is no doubt that given the service these veterans have provided us during wartime, we owe them the best support possible in their post-service life.

So how do we do that?

First, programs that allow those who have served in uniform and who desire to continue their government service in a civilian capacity should be embraced. There is great value in the government competing for these outstanding men and women.

But the majority of transitioning servicemembers do look to the private sector for employment so focus should be put on public, private efforts to land veterans jobs.

So to assist, military personnel need more exposure to the private sector before they leave the service. That exposure needs to happen in the form of enhanced Transition Assistance Programs where the focus needs to be on the veteran getting ahead rather than just getting out. It needs to be taught by human resource professionals from the private sector with some military knowledge so instructors can provide the best chance for the military member to find the best opportunity on the outside. It must include skill-specific resume writing services, information on private sector business culture and hands-on training on how to use all available private sector resources so veterans can get in front of the employers and compete in the human resource networks that exist in the private sector. And it must teach networking and where to find those who can help and give our veterans insight into the marketplace.

Post-service employment preparation should be focused on how to enter the civilian job market rather than trying to create stand-alone programs run by the government. The vast majority of companies in the private sector have very good and generally very efficient ways to find good talent. The key must be to help the veterans get into that system, be identified as veterans * * * and compete.

Second, if government wants a program they can sink their teeth into, it should fund training for those in the field of human resources on how to understand military skill sets and how those skills apply to the civilian world. This training needs to include explanations for primary, secondary and tertiary duties an individual may have had in the service. The Department of Labor has a basic program around this but it could be greatly enhanced.

Third, a better understanding of how military certifications translate to civilian professional certifications should be addressed with all state governments.

My Military.com director of community outreach visited a number of military installations overseas in February of this year. During his visit to Marine Corps Base Camp Butler, he met a Navy Hospital Corpsman Second Class who had recently returned from his second tour in Afghanistan. The Navy Corpsman earned a Bronze Star with a Combat "V" for his heroic efforts in performing a tracheotomy on a wounded Marine during a firefight engagement with insurgents. This Navy Corpsman has the exceptional skills and abilities to perform such a task under extreme hazardous conditions and do it effectively, yet does not warrant becoming a qualified emergency medical technician in the civilian community unless he goes through a full training and certification program where he probably is more qualified than the instructor.

It astounds me that a soldier, sailor, airman, Marine or Coastguardsman can perform surgery on the battlefield but not be certified an EMT in the civilian world without starting from scratch. An all-out effort between VA, Labor and DOD with the 50 states could probably develop a program of what knowledge, skills and abilities would be accepted as certifications within all states with a very short testing period.

Finally, leveraging the expertise of private companies like Monster.com and Military.com is crucial to sustaining any successful, long-term veteran employment efforts.

Military.com knows the private sector; with our parent company, Monster.com we can and do specialize in harnessing the best technology along with the most effective methods to connect our servicemembers with employers. And while most employers don't tell us how many vets they hire, we do know they continually search resumes with veteran status and continually advertise their positions on Monster and Military.com

While the government assists servicemembers with getting out through the Transition Assistance Program, we at Monster.com and Military.com help them get ahead by tapping into our large database of jobs and providing the guidance needed to enter the civilian job world.

Military.com was founded in 1999 by a young Navy reservist to revolutionize the way our 30 million Americans with military affinity stay connected and informed.

Today, Military.com is the largest military and veteran membership organization with more than 10 million members and we're one of the largest news destination sites on the Internet. Our free membership connects servicemembers, military families and veterans to each other and to all the benefits of service at all stages in their lives—government benefits, resources and career services, education information and scholarships, discounts, news and discussion forums to share the great stories and challenges inherent in military life, and more.

In 2004, Military.com joined forces with Monster Worldwide to accelerate our growth and change the playing field for career and educational opportunities for active duty personnel, as well as Guard and reservists, veterans and military spouses. We work hard every day to serve those who serve our country and we're committed to helping our members find work and enter into career paths that will compliment and build on the skills they acquired in the military.

We do this both online and offline.

Online, we offer a comprehensive offering of services, resources and information to support every stage of a military career, from recruitment to boot camp to promotions, retirement, education and second careers.

Military.com created a veteran career center using technology to successfully deliver a personalized experience with a variety of interactive tools and resources. We offer the largest veteran job board in the world featuring military-friendly employers as well as hundreds of thousands of job postings available through our Monster.com database.

We also offer personalized email alerts for new postings that match a veteran's resume and job interests, as well as resume writing tools, education and training information, mentoring through our Veteran Career Network, and electronic newsletters with news and employer information.

To help veterans begin their new career search, we developed our Military Skills Translator. We use the Department of Labor's online resource known as "O-Net," or Occupational Data Network as a baseline to translate current and older military occupational specialty codes into civilian occupations

Then Military.com is taking it one step further. We present the veteran with equivalent jobs currently posted on the Monster job board, including those posted by thousands of military employers specifically looking for veterans. The veteran can immediately apply to one of these jobs from our site or review the job postings and learn what specific experiences, skills, education, and training employers are seeking for this type of position. This information can help the job seeker better "civilianize" their military experience on their resume and best communicate the skill, knowledge, and abilities they acquired while in service. Over the last year, we had over 250,000 separate individuals use our translator an average of 4–5 times per person.

Through the Military Skills Translator, not only are veterans empowered to apply to currently available jobs, they can also see members of our Military.com's Veteran Career Network who have indicated they held that same Military Occupational Specialty.

One of our fastest growing services that is still in beta form is this mentor network that connects veterans seeking new careers with employed veterans as well as military supporters. Military.com members who volunteer for this feature create a profile containing details about their military experience, professional interests, and their current job position and employer.

Veterans using this feature can find a career network mentor by company, government agency, career field, industry or geographic location. Once the veteran job seeker has identified someone with whom they would like to network, he or she can contact a mentor directly through our secure Military.com email tool.

Since the implementation of our Veteran Career Network in 2007, over one million Military.com members have signed on to network with other veterans and help transitioning servicemembers jumpstart their civilian careers.

Our members also access financial information and guidance. Our Finance Channel drew over 450,000 views in March 2011 because of the comprehensive information VA home loans and our relocation guide which helps military families through their mandatory moves.

For example, in March 2011 alone we had 3 million views on our Benefits and Education Channel which includes information on TRICARE, GI Bill, VA health care, survivor benefits and information on PTSD resources and support.

We keep our members in touch with the latest information about their benefits and interests with our email newsletters, of which 35 million are sent each month to our members who subscribe to them. Our most popular newsletters are the Vet-

erans Insider with over 8 million subscribers, our Careers newsletters with over 800,000 subscribers and our Active Duty Insider with over 4 million subscribers. These newsletters offer tailored content and feature relevant information and resource links for our audience.

Offline, we actively engage with the communities we serve through in person events.

Currently we host, in conjunction with our non-profit partner, the Non-Commissioned Officers Association, over 40 career expos a year. Our efforts and quality of service have not gone unnoticed. PBS News recently featured our efforts during a segment on veteran's employment issues and Sen. Mark Warner has supported our work by acting as an honorary host for our events in Virginia.

In 2010, over 15,000 members attended our 33 career fair events across the country. Since January of this year, we have held 11 career fair events, attended by more than 3500 veterans and transitioning servicemembers. We have also recently begun hosting Veteran Power Seeker Workshops in advance of our career fairs to help attendees write resumes, acquire interviewing and networking skills and research employers so they are prepared to most successfully engage with employers at the event.

These career fairs are important because it gives us one to one interaction with both employers and transitioning servicemembers. Here we are able to walk job seekers through the interview process, review resumes and counsel them about the many opportunities outside of the government that they may not have known they were qualified for. Conversely we get the chance to meet with employers and "decode" the military skills or vernacular they are seeing on resumes and point out what skills sets will best fit their needs.

If you question the ability of the private sector to embrace and assist our veterans in their job search, look no further than Military.com and the solid relationships we have created between our servicemembers, veterans and employers.

In conclusion, we no longer have finite wars with treaties being signed on the deck of a battleship. Today's changing global environment means that any time our military can be called to action, tapped for humanitarian assistance or used to quell instability around the globe.

As such, we have a much longer-term obligation to understand veterans and the employment they seek. Rather than the "home from war" mentality of previous generations, we now have to see veteran's employment as a rolling responsibility that will remain a permanent fixture on our national landscape.

Just as the Post WWII generation enjoyed the "Golden Age of Education" we can and should see this as our opportunity to create the "Golden Age of Employment" for those who have served our Nation so proudly. We are fortunate enough here in our country to have an all-volunteer force, one that emerges from, and ultimately goes back into the civilian population.

It stands to reason that a crucial component in ensuring jobs for those veterans who return to civilian life is leveraging the expertise and involvement of the private sector.

Madam Chairwoman and members of the Subcommittee, this concludes my statement. I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.

RESPONSE TO POSTHEARING QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. JON TESTER TO T.L. MCCREARY, RADM USN (RET.), PRESIDENT, MILITARY.COM

Question 1. A lot of the men and women who join our military, do so because of the skills and experience they can acquire—something to serve them well in the job market and make them more attractive to potential employers. It's clear from your testimony that a major hurdle has been the fact that military experience is not always understood by or translated well to civilian employers.

Compounding the problem is the absence of any certifications by DOD that provide evidence of the specific training and experience acquired during military service. It seems to me that, if we are going to invest so much in each of these folks, we could at least provide them with something that better documents their skills and experience and makes them more marketable to future employers.

When we chatted in my office, you mentioned Military.com's Military Skills Translator. Can you speak to this program and any potential adaptability of the concept by DOD?

ANSWER: In early 2002, The Department of Labor in partnership with the Department of Defense initiated a program known as the "United Services Military Apprenticeship Program" (USMAP) which was established to help active duty enlisted servicemembers of the sea services, Navy, Marine and Coast Guard to earn

certification for 125 apprenticable trade skills learned through documented training and work experience (on-the-job training) and related technical instruction.

In addition the Army created a program in 2005 known as "Credentialing Opportunities On-Line" (COOL) which is similar to USMAP, providing enlisted soldiers with a guided instructional program on how to obtain civilian credential certification for their military occupational specialties.

The Air Force also offers a credentialing information program through the Community College of the Air Force (CCAF) program, which is open to all enlisted Airmen.

These programs still exist today. It is our opinion that they receive very little marketing efforts within the respective services, where most servicemembers do not know or have heard anything about these programs until after they leave active duty. Because these particularly mentioned programs are only available while on active duty, it becomes too late for a transitioning servicemember who learns about the program as he or she departs from active duty.

While these programs do provide some guidance for servicemembers to learn about the procedures to become credentialed for civilian certification, most servicemembers feel that what they have learned in both classroom, on-the-job-training, and practical experience, especially those who put these skills to practical use in combat and or operational situations, far exceeds the established credential program, yet they feel that they have to go through unnecessary steps and procedures to obtain the civilian credentials.

Ref: USMAP: https://usmap.cnet.navy.mil/usmapss/static/usmap.jsp; Army COOL Program: https://www.cool.army.mil/overview.htm; CCAF: http://www.au.af.mil/au/ccaf/certifications.asp.

That said, the biggest issue facing our men and women is not just getting the paperwork, but having states certify that these qualifications are equivalent to the states' requirements and that the appropriate testing and certification licenses be issued by the state. Each service would then have to have the states evaluate their programs and agree they meet state requirement for certification.

With regard to the Military.com's Military Skills Translator—To help veterans begin their new career search, we developed our Military Skills Translator. We use Department of Labor's online resource known as "O*Net Occupational Data" as a baseline to translate current and older MOS codes into civilian occupations Then Military.com takes it one step further: we present the veteran with equivalent jobs currently posted on the Monster job board, including those posted by thousands of military employers specifically looking for veterans. The veteran can immediately apply to one of these jobs from our site, or review the job postings and learn what specific experiences, skills, education and training employers are seeking for this type of position. This information can help the job seeker better "civilianize" their military experience on their resume and best communicate the skills, knowledge and abilities they acquired while in service.

Question 2. In your testimony, I also heard a lot of concerns about the military's transition assistance program or TAP. It seems to me that many folks view this as just another box to check as they rush to get out the door. At a time when they're simply trying to get back home to their families as quickly as they can, we are throwing a ton of information at them. I'm sure it can be overwhelming.

It's important information but it's not always digestible. We need to figure out a better way of making this information available. But we also need a better way of making it user-friendly and more adaptable to a veterans' specific situation. Could you speak to the costs and feasibility of utilizing human resource professionals from the private sector to aid in the VA's assistance program on military installations?

Response. Post-service employment preparation should be focused on how to enter the civilian job market. I believe that TAP can be improved to provide veterans with the skills they need to compete in the private sector. This will require a paradigm shift in the current program, which provides veterans with the information they need to leave the service rather than with the skills they need to get ahead in the job market.

As to the cost of using private sector human resource personnel, I believe it would be minimal as it would be taking one set of instructors and replacing them with others. The contractors that teach these courses could do that easily and I believe it would enhance the program. I hope the Committee asks the VA, DOL and DOD to look into it. Military.com and our parent company Monster.com works with many veteran friendly employers, maybe these companies could provide someone such as a retired human resources professional.

I also believe that TAP could be enhanced if the course content include, skill-specific resume writing services, information on private sector business culture and hands-on training on how to use all available private sector resources so veterans

can get in front of the employers and compete in the human resource networks that exist in the private sector. And it must teach networking and where to find those who can help and give our veterans insight into the marketplace.

Chairman MURRAY. Thank you very much, Admiral.

Mr. Yauger.

STATEMENT OF MICHAEL L. YAUGER, PRESIDENT, TEAMSTERS LOCAL UNION 786, COORDINATOR, INTERNATIONAL BROTHERHOOD OF TEAMSTERS' HELMETS TO HARDHATS AND HEROES TO HEALTHCARE PROGRAMS

Mr. YAUGER. Chairman Murray, Ranking Member Burr and distinguished Members of the Committee, the International Brotherhood of Teamsters welcomes the opportunity to participate in today's hearing on Veterans Employment: Improving the Transition from Battlefield to the Workforce.

My name is Mike Yauger. I serve in the capacity of international coordinator for the Teamster's Helmets to Hardhats program and the Teamster's Heroes to Health Care program. As a younger man, I had the honor and the privilege of serving in America's military as a team leader and Army Ranger with the 173rd Airborne Brigade.

In the course of that duty, I learned firsthand some very important lessons about life. My service taught me the meaning of honor, duty, and commitment. These values form the very foundation upon which we formed our Teamsters programs around.

For the past 6 years, the Teamsters have been leaders in actively identifying and developing programs to assist our veterans in transitioning their military skills into the civilian sector. A veteran who receives military training for Class 8 vehicles receives a military license and is exempt from commercial driver's license requirements imposed by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Act.

When a veteran is discharged and separates from the military, the military license is of absolutely no use in the civilian sector. In order to obtain a CDL license, the veteran must go through all the State requirements. This may include another training program, a CDL licensing test and finding and renting a Class 8 truck to take road skills test. This is a cumbersome and very costly procedure to impose on someone who is facing numerous challenges transitioning back to civilian life.

For example, we have a service person who can drive heavy vehicles along supply lines in Iraq in 120-degrees heat while being shot at. Yet, when they return home, their military driver's license and driving experience does not qualify them to receive a civilian license for commercial value. To solve this particular problem, the Teamsters created the Teamsters Military CDL Licensing Program. It is important to note that we did not do this in isolation, rather we worked in partnership with multiple State agencies and the military schoolhouses to analyze the differentials between Teamster training and the military curriculum.

The result is a 200-hour course that bridges the gaps between the two. The course is taught by certified Teamster trainers at no cost to the veteran. The program is active in Illinois, and it is currently being developed in Washington State, Las Vegas, New York, Northern and Southern California. The Teamsters military licens-

ing program serves as a model for much of our ongoing efforts in support of our Nation's veterans. This means a model of bringing all interested parties together, analyzing the issues and then solving that problem.

While we have overcome many of the challenges, it has not been easy. In fact, the seemingly logical and straightforward CDL program was 3 years in the making. During this process, we realized that our military must overcome certain inherent impediments and must serve as a strong ally in breaking down the barriers that currently inhibit a veteran's transition back to civilian life. This means jobs. Additionally, assisting this transition would be significantly more successful if there were an avenue to provide employers with verifiable proof of a veteran's training and experience acquired while serving in the military.

Another example of an innovative program to employ veterans is the National Building and Construction Trades Helmets to Hardhats program. The Teamsters are active, supporting partners to the program, and they have assisted in placement of over 40,000 veterans in the construction trades over the past 5 years. Through interaction with veterans over the past 5 years, we have discovered and identified gaps in the transition process not specific to only the construction industry.

Another example of an innovative veterans employment program which the Teamsters have had a pivotal role is within the health care industry.

Teamsters have been partners to developing the Heroes to Health Care program. H2HC is a collaborative effort comprised of State representatives—excuse me, representatives from service branches, Federal, State, and local governments, hospitals and health-care sector employers, private sector leaders, union organizations and their affiliations, non-profits and academia.

The primary goal of H2HC is to create the framework for expedited training, licensing and employment of our veterans who possess the qualified service-related training in the health-care profession. Unfortunately, it is common for a veteran who provided life-saving skills on the battlefield to be offered no more than a position of an orderly in a civilian hospital. Approximately 8,000 medical corpsmen leave military service each year with most having served at least one tour in Iraq or Afghanistan. Some of those transitioning careers are inclusive to EMTs, lab technicians, radiology technicians, medical equipment repair specialists and physician assistants.

One group of veterans deserves the country's special attention and that is our wounded warriors.

The Teamsters have worked closely with and have participated in extended outreach to our wounded warriors. Whether their wounds are visible or not, we have worked with the Departments of Employment Security to put resources in place to identify specific tools and specific employers who can work within the confines of their physical and emotional well-being.

The Boston Teamsters have developed a campaign called IPODS for Wounded Veterans. This campaign has created a stir nationally as the project has raised enough funds to supply wounded warriors in recovery with 117 iPods and growing.

As taxpayers, we have invested over $125,000 in recruitment, screening, testing and just basic training for every man and woman currently serving in our Armed Forces. Our military provides the members of our Armed Forces with the finest equipment, the finest education available anywhere in the world. Yet upon their honorable completion of their service, they are given no documentation or accreditation attesting to the level of their skills. In addition to the sizable initial investment as taxpayers, when the cost of their advanced individual training is added to that equation, it should be apparent to all that we have a strategic resource much too valuable to overlook.

There was a time when young men and women in this country could count on the military to learn a marketable skill that would serve them well on their road to achieving the American dream. It is now time for our legislatures, military, and employers to give these fine young men and women who honorably served credit where credit is due. We have defined and been partners to an overall program that supports all of the identified efforts. Partnership with America will work with them in the industry affiliate and all the affiliated programs and provide them with the mentorship tools for veterans to excel in whatever industry they would like to transition to, as well as educate the industry leaders and human resource administrators with the tools they will need to implement the veteran skills into the workforce community.

It has been our experience that failure to address these critical issues of successful transition to employment will result in amplifying the incidence of behavioral issues, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, alcohol abuse, which is the leading factor in the increase of suicides. We have at taxpayers' expense provided the best education with the best technology and equipment in the world. We must partner to provide support to better serve those who have honorably served this great Nation.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to discuss our experience in helping veterans to transition to the civilian workforce. We look forward to working with you on this very important matter.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Yauger follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MICHAEL L. YAUGER, PRESIDENT, TEAMSTERS LOCAL UNION 786, COORDINATOR, INTERNATIONAL BROTHERHOOD OF TEAMSTERS HELMETS TO HARDHATS AND HEROES TO HEALTH CARE PROGRAMS

Chairwoman Murray, Ranking Member Burr, and distinguished Members of the Committee, the International Brotherhood of Teamsters welcomes the opportunity to participate in today's hearing on "Veterans' Employment: Improving the Transition from Battlefield to the Workforce."

My name is Mike Yauger. I serve in the capacity of International Coordinator for the Teamsters Helmets to Hardhats program and the Teamsters Heroes to Health Care program. As a younger man I had the honor and the privilege of serving in America's military as an Army Ranger. In the course of that duty I learned firsthand some very important lessons about life. My service taught me the meaning of honor, duty and commitment. These values form the very foundation upon which Teamsters programs are built.

For the past six years, the Teamsters have been leaders in actively identifying and developing programs to assist our veterans in transitioning their military skills into the civilian sector. A veteran who receives military training for class 8 vehicles receives a military license and is exempt from commercial drivers' license (CDL) requirements imposed by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) and states. When a veteran is discharged and separates from the military the military license is of no use in the civilian sector. In order to obtain a CDL license the

veteran must go through all of the state requirements. This may include another training program, a CDL licensing test, and finding or renting a Class 8 truck to take the road skills test. This is a cumbersome and very costly procedure to impose on someone who is facing numerous challenges transitioning back to civilian life. This effort is complicated by the fact that most of the training our service people receive is not recognized and/or well understood by civilian employers. For example, a service person can drive heavy vehicles along supply lines, in 120 degree heat, while being shot at; yet when they return home, their military driver's licenses and driving experience does not qualify them to receive a civilian commercial driver's license or "CDL."

To solve this particular problem, the Teamsters created the Teamsters/Military CDL Licensing Program. It is important to note that we did not do this in isolation. Rather, we worked in partnership with multiple state agencies and the military school houses to analyze the differentials between Teamsters training and the military curriculum. The result is a 200 hour course that bridges the gaps between the two. The course is taught by certified Teamster trainers at no cost to the veteran. The program is active in Illinois and is currently being developed in Washington State, Las Vegas, New York, and Northern and Southern California.

The Teamsters/Military Licensing program serves as the model for much of our ongoing efforts in support of our Nation's veterans. This means a model of bringing all interested parties together, analyzing the issues, and then solving that problem. While the objective of our programs is to develop and provide gainful career opportunities for our returning sons and daughters, we have encountered many obstacles and impediments to their successful transition. While we have overcome many of these challenges, it has not been easy. In fact, the seemingly logical and straightforward CDL program was three years in the making. During this process, we realized that our military must overcome certain inherent impediments and must serve as a strong ally in breaking down the barriers that currently inhibit a veteran's transition back to civilian life—this means jobs.

Additionally, assisting this transition would be significantly more successful if there were an avenue to provide employers with verifiable proof of a veteran's training and experience acquired while serving in the military. Employers base their hiring decisions upon verification of work history, educational degrees and state or industry recognized certifications. Military experience is not well understood by civilian employers, nor does it equate to civilian certifications. Our experience has taught us that if the military as a whole would work with civilian certifying entities to provide courses that attest to their level of education and qualifications while serving, this would go a long way toward enhancing employers' understanding and embracing of military training and experience. This, in turn, would encourage employers to increasingly recruit and hire veterans.

Another example of an innovative program to employ veterans is the National Building and Construction Trades Helmets to Hardhats program. The Teamsters are active supporting partners to the program and have assisted in placement of over forty thousand veterans in the construction trades over the past five years. Through interaction with veterans over the past five years, we have discovered and identified gaps in the transition process not specific to only the Construction industry. We have interviewed veteran candidates from across the country and understand that many of the challenges they are faced with in transitioning their military skills into the civilian sector.

Two primary challenges exist within every industry that stems from identifying educational/training and job experience requirements for each career pathway. For employers this includes identifying pathways to vocational transition for maintaining and building a high performance workforce. For the military, the challenges include supporting their returning veterans who not only are successful soldiers, but to also be successful in civilian life. Again, this means jobs.

The answer two both of these challenges is to create an engine for partnership among the military, labor and employers, the educational/training community, state certifying agencies and the veterans themselves. We must work together to identify and create a framework for expediting training, licensing and certification based on qualifying service related training and experience. Our country has an obligation to assist veterans in attaining the certification they need to achieve employment. This includes creating a methodology for connecting them to employers and industry experts once they return from service. This will reduce the number of returning veterans who use their GI Bill dollars on training and education in areas in which there will be no jobs

Another example of an innovative veteran's employment program in which the Teamsters have had a pivotal role is within the healthcare industry. Teamsters have been partners to developing the Heroes to HealthCare (H2HC) program. H2HC

is a collaborative effort comprised of representatives from service branches, Federal, state and local governments, hospitals and health care sector employers, private sector leaders, union organizations and their affiliates, nonprofits and academia. The primary goal of H2HC is to create the framework for expedited training, licensing and employment of veterans who possess qualified service related training in the healthcare professions. Unfortunately, it is common for a veteran who provided life saving skills on the battlefield to be offered no more than the position of an orderly in civilian hospitals. Approximately 8,000 medical corpsmen leave military service each year, with most having served at least one tour in Iraq and Afghanistan. Some of those transitioning careers are inclusive to EMT's, Lab Technicians and Radiology Technicians, Medical Equipment Repair Specialist and Physician Assistants. H2HC is currently working with regulatory agencies on the Federal and individual state levels to design and implement a system of translation of military experience and qualifications into each states certification scheme—such as the model used in creating the CDL licensing program.

One group of veterans deserves this country's special attention: our Wounded Warriors. The Teamsters have worked closely with and have participated in extended outreach to our Wounded Warriors—whether their wounds are visible or not. We have worked with Departments of Employment Security to put resources in place to identify specific tools and specific employers who can work within the confines of their physical and emotional well being while still ensuring the highest quality work result. The Boston Teamsters have developed a campaign that called "IPODS for Wounded Veterans" this campaign has created a stir nationally as the project has raised enough funds to supply wounded warriors in recovery with 117 IPods and growing.

We have partnered with universities to bring training and educational opportunities to veterans in the high growth areas of energy efficiency, renewable energy and smart grid. These are high demand, high growth areas; again, this means jobs.

As taxpayers we have invested over $125,000 in recruitment, screening, testing and basic training for every man and woman currently serving in our Armed Forces. Our military provides the members of our Armed Forces with the finest equipment and the finest education available anywhere in the world. Yet upon the honorable completion of their service they are given no documentation or accreditation attesting to the level of their skills. In addition to the sizable initial investment, when the cost of their advanced individual training is added to the equation it should be apparent to all that we have a strategic resource much too valuable to overlook. There was a time when young men and women could count on the military to learn a marketable skill that would serve them well on their road to achieving the American dream. It is now time for our legislators, military and employers to give these fine young men and women who honorably served credit where credit is due. We have defined and been partners to an overall program that supports all of the identified efforts, Partnership with America (PWA). PWA will work with all of the industry affiliated programs and provide them with the mentorship tools for veterans to excel in whatever industry they would like to transition to as well as educate the industry leaders and human resource administrators with the tools they will need to implement the veteran's skills into their workforce community.

It has been our experience that failure to address these critical issues of successful transition to employment will result in amplifying the incidence of behavioral issues, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and incidences of drugs and alcohol abuse which is the leading factor in the increase of suicides. We have at taxpayers' expense provided the best education with the best technology and equipment in the world. We must partner to provide support to better serve those who have honorably served this great Nation.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to discuss our experience in helping veterans to transition to the civilian workforce. We look forward to working with you on this important endeavor.

RESPONSE TO POSTHEARING QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. MARK BEGICH TO MICHAEL L. YAUGER, PRESIDENT, TEAMSTERS LOCAL UNION 786, COORDINATOR, INTERNATIONAL BROTHERHOOD OF TEAMSTERS HELMETS TO HARDHATS AND HEROES TO HEALTH CARE PROGRAMS

Mr. Yauger, Alaska's Helmet to Hardhat program gets numerous calls from active duty short-timers and vets looking for assistance in obtaining a CDL—for a short time it was great to refer them to AVOTEC (Army Vocational/Technical Soldier Program). But now they have to tell them to check with the Education office on post.

Question. What action needs to be taken to get the Teamsters and VETS and the States to get Veterans their CDLs so they can work?

Response. The Teamsters have discussed this with the Alaska Teamster Employer Service Training Trust who provides a significant amount of CDL training and testing in Alaska. They have committed to provide printed information on CDL training and testing to the various military education offices around the State of Alaska and to veteran organizations.

In addition the Teamsters have had active support to their program from conception and are working with the United States Army Transition and Policy Committees and Marines for Life National Director, Col. Joseph Krumm as well as Lt. General Jack Stultz, Chief of the U.S. Army Reserves. The Army is actually going take on the task of prescreening army candidates who would like to take advantage of this opportunity. They will also be identifying the program to those military candidates that have had a Military CDL License. Inclusive to that outreach we are working with the Department of Veterans Affairs and Department of Employment Security/Workforce Training offices in all states we are active in and have had outreach in each state with elected officials, Secretary of State offices and Veteran Service Organizations to assist in outreach to the veteran community. This protocol can be developed into any state.

The veteran that would like to obtain a civilian military license in most states must obtain a permit for the CDL A License typically provided by the the Secretary of State's (Department of Motor Vehicles) office. This is a written test and study guides are available through the Secretary of State's office and now also online via the Teamsters Training Center www.illinoisteamsterstraining.org a free online study guide is in place to prepare them to take the written permit test required by state and Federal guidelines. Illinois Teamsters/Management and Labor Trust funded the development of the online study guide. This will assist the veteran in preparing for the written permit exam. Any Veteran, Reserve or Guard candidate will have the capability to access/register for the online study guide at no cost. (Specific criteria was developed to identify them as veterans/military personnel to access specific log in codes.)

Once the veteran obtains their CDL permit they will then be eligible to register to take the 200 Hours course (Secretary State Approved) developed by the Teamsters with approval from the Department of Veterans Affairs State Approving Agency. As of October 1, 2011, the Post-9/11 GI Bill Chapter 33 will cover the cost of the training for veterans as this would fall under the guidelines of vocational training/tuition assistance. The Illinois Teamsters Trust fund is funding the first course/class for veterans in June 2011. Teamsters training centers in Washington State, Northern and Southern California, New York and Las Vegas are preparing to launch the Teamsters/Military Licensing program in their states as well. The Teamsters are active in working with the Army and Marine Corp. to identify specific candidates that had military occupational skills that match the criteria and would like to continue driving in the civilian workforce community.

State by state DOT offices should recognize the veterans training and also cooperate by identifying a veteran's preference to those veteran candidates that complete the course. In turn the teamsters will identify the program to their employers who will also have the opportunity to employ these candidates and other veteran candidates who are seeking employment in the transportation industry.

This was and continues to be an overall partnership/collaborated effort with state agencies, Federal agency support, military partners and the Teamsters. It is necessary to complete this as a state by state effort due to the state wide regulations specific Federal licensing.

The International Brotherhood of Teamsters are the leaders in the transportation industry and recognized for quality training in every state. Teamsters/Military CDL Licensing program was the only alternative solution that made sense to all affiliated entities that have been seeking solutions for this particular workforce initiative.

Chairman MURRAY. Thank you very much to all of you for your very compelling testimony.

Mr. Smith, let me start with you. You served your country honorably. You had enormous responsibility as a combat medic, and a huge variety of training and skills during your time of service, and you came home to apply for a job in the civilian world. The one thing between you and your job was a piece of paper, a certification that said you did what you did, correct?

Mr. SMITH. Yes, ma'am, that is it. Nothing more to say about that. It was a piece of paper separating me from that job, which at that time I desperately needed.

Chairman MURRAY. Mr. Yauger, I heard you say the same thing for commercial driver's license, the one thing that separates men and women who serve in the military is a piece of paper saying they did what they did?

Mr. YAUGER. Yes, ma'am, that is absolutely correct. We have a need in this country right now for 515,000 CDL license holders by the year 2015.

Yet it takes them 9 months to 1 year for a transitioning serviceman just to transition his to a CDL license because we have laws in this country that say you are not insurable unless you can prove and validate that you have 3 years of verifiable experience driving.

Chairman MURRAY. So the military says to you, Mr. Smith, you did great, thank you very much, goodbye, but they do not give you that one piece of paper saying you did what you did that translates into the civilian world as certification, correct?

Mr. SMITH. Right, it is not a standard set of best practices, if you will, that allows each and every servicemember in those specialties to get the same certification. Now, in the Navy, for instance, you have opportunities to get on your own time. It's driven basically by a sailor's own initiative.

You have that ability to get equivalent certifications like your LVN license, vocational nurse license, your EMT license. But that's pretty easy for the corpsman that works a fixed shift, 9 to 5 in a small clinic. He comes into work. He goes home, you know, plays Xbox and then he goes to study for his exam.

For a corpsman much like myself who was working 12-hour shifts in the ICU, or that green side corpsman, that corpsman that's attached to the Marine Corps side, either they are doing back-to-back-deployments, where is the time to study up to be able to take the test to get those qualifications? I will tell you right now, there is none.

Chairman MURRAY. There is no ability to do that, so you get out without that certification?

Mr. SMITH. Right.

Chairman MURRAY. So if you were to go do an equivalent type of job in your State right now, how much training would you need? How many years of training to prove to that employer that you have the necessary experience; do you know?

Mr. SMITH. To be perfectly honest, it would not take me any time at all. You know, there are systems in place, the Smart Transfer Program that converts my experience into equivalent credits. That varies throughout each college. It would take me no time.

Chairman MURRAY. So you would have to go back and take classes?

Mr. SMITH. Right, absolutely, and I would dip into my G.I. Bill to do so.

Chairman MURRAY. So it would cost taxpayer monies.

Mr. SMITH. Again.

Chairman MURRAY. To educate you to do the same thing you had done before, but just to get a piece of paper.

Mr. SMITH. Yes, ma'am.

Chairman MURRAY. My point is that this is a tremendous cost to this country to retrain you to do the job you did before, but for a lack of piece of paper.

Mr. SMITH. Yes, ma'am.

Chairman MURRAY. I think that is a problem we need to address.

Mr. Reppenhagen, your story is extremely compelling. I'm really curious. You were a sniper when you were in the military. How did you make the leap to Green Jobs?

Mr. REPPENHAGEN. You know, I had a dedication to the personnel within my platoon; I took care of them. When I transferred out of the military, they actually gave me as a going-away gift, they all signed a Mother's Day card. So I knew that I wanted to continue serving my fellow veterans and comrades on the other side, to help with that transition.

So, immediately when I got out I got into non-profit work and started working here in Washington, DC, with Veterans for America, first, as just a spokesperson and then as I learned skills among the non-profit world, I started gaining more management skills and program directing skills. When I located Veterans Green Jobs, I thought it was a good fit. This was before the administration change. It seemed like it was definitely a good way forward and there are a lot of opportunities for veterans to take these positions.

It basically followed the downturn in the economy, and it has been a hard fight, I think, for all of us in this current environment. So there are certainly no transferable skills between being a sniper in Iraq and working in a non-profit organization other than having dedication and really wanting to continue to serve my fellow veterans.

Chairman MURRAY. It seems to me you do a couple things really well. One, you train veterans, but you also place them. How could we replicate what you have done with Green Jobs and other sectors of the economy?

Mr. REPPENHAGEN. Well, I think one of the advantages that we have is that we have a very, very narrow niche of jobs that we are looking at trying to penetrate, which allows us to look at holistic programs for the veterans that are interested in those positions and training in those careers. So we can target educational institutions and employers that are specifically fastened in that green economy niche.

We realized right away that we did not have the resources to build a very broad program, so we immediately started on the ground developing local partners within city and State governments, and now even Federal partners, which allow us to expand those programs. We can only do a certain few things well, and we rely on the rest of the offices and a lot of the organizations in this room to provide additional care and services to make a holistic program. I think that is the key: really encouraging those partnerships and helping promote them and rewarding organizations that collaborate and work together well.

Chairman MURRAY. Very good. Senator Burr.

Senator BURR. On behalf of all of us, I would like to thank all four of you for your personal commitment to serve this country. To some degree it is embarrassing that we are having to have a hearing on this. Admiral, I thank you for the effort that you make at

Military.com and more importantly, the integration in the job search process that you go through.

You and I have had an opportunity to talk, and the online possibilities are unlimited. But it seems like we always come together and talk about the cookie-cutter programs that we come up with; the inside-the-box approaches that government always has to solve a problem that we constantly have a flow of individuals that come up and tell us does not work.

I think all four of you have done a great job of laying out for us individual ideas that you think might help to overcome the challenges that our separated veterans have with employment.

Let me ask you one simple question. What that we do today works? Is there anything that we are currently doing out there that is initiated by government that actually works? Garett?

Mr. REPPENHAGEN. I think the new G.I. Bill is an incredible opportunity.

Senator BURR. I agree with you totally, and I think most Members do, too. Let me just raise an issue.

For-profit institutions are under the crosshairs of the sniper's rifle in Washington right now. Yet for-profit institutions are in fact the majority of the institutions that our veterans choose to go to get the technical skills or the certification, Eric, that they are looking for. Even though they might have been a mechanic for 15 years in the military, they still have to go in before the automobile dealer is going to hire them at a job of $70,000 a year, but it is 14 months out of their life. It is paid for, but in the infinite wisdom that we have, we are beginning to target institutions to eliminate their ability to spend Federal tuition dollars.

Now, some would tell you that is not targeted to happen with the G.I. Bill. I would tell you, if you do it with one side of Federal dollars, the leakage is over to another side of Federal dollars. It will not benefit our separating veterans.

Are there other specific jobs programs that are out there, some duplicative, that today helped you or helped somebody that you know?

Admiral MCCREARY. I think they are too broad and do not target the level of someone of where they are coming out of the service. Somebody who is coming out of the service and retiring and somebody coming out after their first tour or second tour have different needs in that market.

Unfortunately, we have not seen any jobs issues around veterans from a government perspective work, and I think what we try and do with that is recreate what exists out there, yet do not prepare the vet to compete in the market. You know, we do a tremendous amount of training our men and women who serve for conditions on the battlefield. We ought to apply that same rigor and training as they are preparing to get out to go and compete on the job battlefield and compete out there in the private sector. Take the vets to the employers with the skill sets they need to explain their qualifications and their jobs rather than trying to bring, if you will, the employers into where the vets are and kind of limit the scope of what they see.

I think until we embrace that and realize that we do not have to create a specific program for everything but really apply some

very narrow focus to give the talented men and women that we really discussed earlier the skills to actually go out and compete, that that is what will make it work.

I have not really seen that happen to date.

Now, I couldn't have said that 6 years ago when I was on the other side because when you are inside the government, hey, you know, of course, we can solve every problem, right? You see that. Now that I have seen it from both sides, and after talking to several thousand of our 10 million members, I have an appreciation that until they get out and actually get adjusted to the culture and learn how to plan it, they are less successful.

So let's move that skill set prior to them getting out.

Senator BURR. I saw Eric shaking his head. He agreed with you. Let me just say, Admiral, I wrote down three things from your testimony—not that the rest of it was not important. But I noted: transition preparation, something that clearly is not done today; help writing resumes. You know, I think to some degree that is overlooked. It is not just a deficiency within departing vets, it is a deficiency within the next generation of this country right now.

I thought for the first time somebody actually identified in your statement what needs to be done: coordination between military, government, and States to set up a certification process that applies to everybody. I know, Mr. Yauger, the unions have tried to do this in the limited capacity that you have.

Mr. YAUGER. Well, actually, Senator, we have an advantage because we already have companies that are signatory to our bargaining-unit agreements and who are very patriotic people and believe in the skill sets of our military. We have proven to them that these drivers that come out of the military have the necessary skills. They were willing to take a chance, and that is why we have been so successful in transitioning them into the construction trades.

For example, a combat engineer that trains at Fort Leonard Wood, MI, not only trains how to drive a truck, he trains on how to drive a bulldozer, a Bobcat. He is trained on how to do surveying. He is a well-rounded individual. His only decision when he gets out is going to be choosing what he wants to be. Do I want to be a welder, a surveyor, an HVAC specialist?

The mentorship that we give them there steers them in that direction.

Senator BURR. But even that individual who did electricians work for 15 years, in all likelihood is subject to the State he chooses to go to as to how hard the certification is going to be, and that is just wrong.

Mr. YAUGER. Well, what happens is in the civilian sector, when you go to college for 4 years, they give you a diploma when you get out and you take that diploma and you bring it to your job interview and the prospective company that you are going to go work for, he looks at that, your H.R. guy, and he sees this as having real value. This is proof that you have been exposed to a certain course of education.

A young man gets out of the military, shows up with his DD–214 and they look at that and the first thing they want to look at,

does this guy have any emotional problems? Does this guy have this? Does this guy have that?

The fact of the matter is, and this is what really aggravates probably all the people sitting at this table, we have the best and the brightest military we have ever had in our lives. The cream of the crop of America's youth serve in our military. When they enter the military, they raised their right hand and they swear an oath to the people of this country in front of God that they will be willing to give their life in the defense of our country, our citizens, and our way of life. Then, when they get out, we betray their trust.

We trusted them to protect us, and then we betray their trust by letting them flounder out there. In a time where we have so many Reservists and National Guardsmen doing logistical command work, we not only have those soldiers, sailors, airmen and Coast Guardsmen and Marines, we have their families to deal with. And when you do not find gainful employment opportunities for these people, the divorce rate goes up, the behavioral problems increase, the incidences of post-traumatic stress increase.

I want to remind you, we are in a pretty bad time. I don't have to tell you guys that. We live in a time when you have to roll your sleeves up. You have to use it up, and you have to wear it out. When you already spend that much money training these young men and women, and then you get out and you have to support them for a year and add more money to the budget to pay for the G.I. Bill, this is money badly spent twice.

We need to take that investment that we make, roll it over, build on it. Give our taxpayers in this country a return on their investment. Nobody deserves—these are our sons and daughters that are going in harm's way for us. These are not some strangers. We already gave them the best equipment, the best training in the world. We should give them a bite of that American apple.

Senator BURR. These are also our future leaders.

Mr. YAUGER. That is exactly right.

Senator BURR. I have gone over my time. The Chairman has been gracious. Let me just say, one might conclude that I condemned every program that the Federal Government has for employment for veterans. There are programs that work; let me State that.

Mr. YAUGER. Yes, there are.

Senator BURR. But I hope that for the programs that do not measure outcomes, that you are as disgusted as I am that we would continue to fund those efforts. It is impossible for me to believe that we will solve this problem if we are not held accountable for an increase in the number of veterans that do not have jobs, and I think I speak for the Committee when I say we will continue to enlist your suggestions as to things that we can do.

Maybe some of them are a bridge too far, but I am convinced that we will be willing to do anything we can to make sure that these heroes are rewarded with a job. We appreciate them. Thank you.

Chairman MURRAY. Thank you very much. Senator Tester.

Senator TESTER. Thank you, Madam Chairman. I too want to express my appreciation for each and every one of your service to this

country. I am just going to go right down the line. Probably I will start with you, Garett.

You talked about in your testimony taxpayer checkoffs to do some environmental clean up, and we have a ton of old mines in Montana, and I know there are issues in the Gulf Coast. You listed many of them. I think it is an interesting concept. How far have you taken it as an organization?

Mr. REPPENHAGEN. We haven't. I mean, we are still investigating creative ideas. We are certainly not an advocacy organization. We typically do not spend a lot of time here on Capitol Hill or even within our State offices advocating for any sort of changes.

I think if we gave the public an option to really invest in our veterans, I think we will see an increase in money coming to us, whether it is through employment funds or through direct taxation. I think our citizens will elect to give more to veterans to help us out.

Senator TESTER. I actually agree with that assessment a lot, and I think it is an interesting concept. I think it needs some fleshing out to potentially move forward with it. I think it has merit.

Eric, I guess the first question is, do you want to move to Montana?

[Laughter.]

Mr. SMITH. If I can bring my whole entire family along with me.

Senator TESTER. Yeah, well, I will tell you, there are a couple of things that—I mean, your testimony, as well as everybody's testimony, pointed out the lack of coordination from military to civilian life. Often times—and I will get to this with you Mr. Yauger—often times I think it may be government-to-government. I mean, you are talking about a CDL license. That is not private sector. The people who give those CDL licenses are government once again. So we need to do some work there.

I wish the director of the VA was here, because I can tell you in Montana, we are looking for medical professionals all the time, all the time. It has always been my assumption that VA looked to veterans first and if they do not, they should. So we will visit about that, I am sure, at hearings in this Committee.

But I mean, you point out in very real terms what needs to be done, I think, as far as transferring the knowledge that you have gained on the field of battle and in the theater of war to what goes on in our hospitals around here. I cannot believe—because medical professionals are in demand—I will give you an example: my daughter is an RN. I do not care if you are an LPN, a CNA, RN, she could have picked her spot to go to. You should be in that same boat, absolutely, unequivocally.

I want to talk to you about the TAP program though, Mr. Smith. You have been through it. Is it effective? If you were going to change something in it, what would you change?

Mr. SMITH. Well, to start, as was stated by Madam Chairwoman, it is only mandatory right now in the Marine Corps. However, you are able to take the TAP class up to 12 months out from your separation.

Now, me personally, I took the TAP class exactly 12 months out and about maybe 2 or 3 weeks before I deployed to Iraq. It is pretty much, if you talk to any guy, you know, that is ready to get out.

It is basically asking what is the quickest way to get all this stuff checked off my list to get me out of here?

That was my thought process going into it.

This is one less thing to do a year from now when I am ready to check out. You know, like I said, I deployed to Iraq weeks after I took that class and, of course, none of that is going to be retained in that capacity because all I am thinking about are much more important pressing matters like the lives of my Marines. So all that's, you know I bring them, everything.

I think that one, you should shorten that window. You know, 90 days is the magic number when you are separating out of the military. You know, 90 days is when the clock starts, so to speak. Shorten TAP down to 90 days out. It should not be that big of a gap between the time you are taking the class.

Another thing is, we need to update TAP period.

The TAP curriculum as it stands right now is 19-years old. The job market has changed 10, 20, 30 times since that time period. The thing is that everybody receives the same class. It does not matter whether it is a captain that graduated West Point or a PFC from Montana, they are getting that same class, but they have separate needs.

The West Point grad is not going to get out and flip burgers at McDonalds. He is probably going to look toward the corporate sector. He needs a TAP class that targets his special needs and what he can provide to the workforce. The same for that PFC. You know, you need a TAP class that is specific to what he is able to do and what he is able to provide to the civilian workforce.

Senator TESTER. Thank you. I have run out of time, so I am not going to ask my other questions, but may put them in writing. First of all, thank you for your work, Admiral. Thanks for being in the office yesterday to visit about it.

You do a great job at getting the information out to businesses. Do we need to do more education of the businesses and how do we do that?

Do we do that through NFIB? Do we do that through their trade groups? How do we do that?

The other thing, Mr. Yauger, first of all, I appreciate the work the Teamsters is doing. I think it is good work, and you get all the kudos in the world for working to get our vets employed, whether it is in medical care or driving trucks or whatever it be. But the issue of CDL conversion—I want to say big-truck driving in the military's conversion to CDL, I think, has to be done on a State legislative basis.

Mr. YAUGER. That is exactly what we are trying to do. What we do, we put together a program where we could train and actually go to military bases, Reserves and Guards.

Senator TESTER. I think that the work is easily transferable and should be transferable, and it is ridiculous that it is not. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Chairman MURRAY. Thank you very much. Just one quick follow-up on the TAP, the Transitional Assistance Program. It is not mandatory, that is correct? It is old. It needs to be changed. But the timing of when to do it has been a critical question that I have discussed with veterans numerous times.

You say, Mr. Smith, yours was too soon, before you even deployed. It did not mean anything to you when you came back. You probably do not even remember what they said. We have other veterans who tell us all they wanted to do is get out. It is a check-the-box thing. They do not even pay attention; just take the class and be gone.

When is the ideal time, and where is the ideal place to do it?

Mr. SMITH. The ideal time, like I said, is 90 days out. The ideal place to do it is, I guess I would say, somewhere official.

Chairman MURRAY. I have talked to veterans who come home, and they got their TAP program in North Carolina, but where they are going to is Seattle, WA, or Montana. Different job markets, completely different jobs available.

The private sector is not involved, so they do not even know the kinds of skills that are going to be looked for where they return.

Mr. SMITH. I do not think that location matters as much as the content. I think with good content, it does not matter where you go. I mean, there is a certain set of things that are universal. You are just going to find it everywhere. The corporate lingo, it does not change from Maryland to Montana or from Maryland to California. That is always going to be there.

You need to change the content, bottom line, not the location.

Chairman MURRAY. Mr. McCreary, you want to comment?

Admiral MCCREARY. Madam Chairman, I think it really depends on the type of job, but anywhere from 3 to 6 months ahead of time is the best time. But the problem is right now what we do is we do it all offline really, and we hand people information and it goes back into the locker. If we went into the tools of the trade that are out there, where people could actually look through jobs, help write resumes, learn to do that online, I guarantee you there would be more touch points in that 3- to 6-month period before somebody gets out.

Chairman MURRAY. So they could go back and relook at it.

Admiral MCCREARY. Because they can keep getting online. They can keep going back and using all the commercial sites that are available out there, I mean, all of them. You know, one is not going to work for somebody and it is going to work for somebody else, so let's teach the tools to go out there, show everybody where those assets are available and put the resources into that so that people can go back and touch it often in that period.

Chairman MURRAY. It is basic education training. You cannot——

Admiral MCCREARY. There you go.

Chairman MURRAY [continuing]. Give a lecture for an hour and expect anybody to retain that information. There has to be ways that they can relook at it other times and absorb it in different ways.

Admiral MCCREARY. Yes, ma'am.

Chairman MURRAY. Excellent point. I have other questions I want to submit for the record. The record will remain open for questions. I want to really thank all of you for your testimony this morning, and we will now move to the next panel. I will introduce them as you all move out and they move into their chairs here. [Pause.]

Coming up on our second panel, we are going to be—if I can have the Committee's attention—I am going to be introducing our panelists, as they sit down.

We are going to proceed to the second panel.

We will be hearing from Hon. Ray Jefferson, who is the Assistant Secretary for Veterans' Employment and Training Services. If we could have everybody take their conversations out of the Committee hearing room so we can move on.

Following Secretary Jefferson is the Honorable John Berry, who is director of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management. Our final witness this morning is John Campbell, deputy assistant secretary of defense for Wounded Warrior Care and Transition Policy.

Secretary Jefferson, we want to welcome you back to this Committee and appreciate your testimony and your willingness to be here today. Secretary Jefferson.

STATEMENT OF RAYMOND M. JEFFERSON, ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR VETERANS' EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

Mr. JEFFERSON. Senator Tester, thank you for the opportunity to talk about what we are doing with vets to help veterans and transitioning servicemembers. I ask that my full written testimony be made part of the record.

I want to thank the first panel for the comments that they made and also acknowledge the tremendous partnership that we are working in with OPM, DOD, VA, the SVAC and the HVAC, as well as our partners with the veterans service organizations, the private sector, and the non-profits.

We have three primary responsibilities at the Veterans' Employment and Training Service. The first one is preparing servicemembers for meaningful careers, and the primary way to do that is through the Transition Assistance Program. This program is in radical need of being completely transformed and reengineered, and we are doing that this year, and we are on time table to have that done by Veterans Day.

There are six major problems with the TAP program as it stands right now. One, it is one size fits all. No customization, no segmentation. Two, the content is outdated. Three, it is taught primarily by PowerPoint. Four, it does not leverage online technology. Five, there is no follow-up services to embed what you learn and six, there is completely no metrics.

We will be working with some of the national and international best practices. We have one of the leading experts on TAP who is here today from Harvard Business School who has been advising us on how to create a world-class program. We are on record—we are timelined to have that done by Veterans Day.

Also, spouses are eligible for TAP, but last year, less than 2,500 participated. So we are forming a partnership with DOD's Military Spouse Employment Program. It has gotten jobs for 90,000 spouses. We are also partnering with the Services Transition Programs, such as ACAP, with the Army.

Second, a major responsibility we have is providing access to meaningful careers. We have a new model of employer outreach. Vets used to meet with employers one at a time. Now we are work-

ing with them 100 at a time, hundreds at a time. We launched phase one last year. We are now going to phase two with the U.S. Chamber. This is going to consist of 100 mega-hiring fairs around the Nation. We launched our first one in Chicago. We had over 120 employers, over 1,000 veterans there. One employer—as we get the outcomes coming back, one employer has hired six veterans. They are all working already.

We have four more that one employer is looking to hire. The U.S. Chamber brings the employers to the table. VETS, with their partners, bring the veterans to the table. So we have 99 more of those which are going to be rolling out over the next year across the Nation. We are also replicating our pilot program with the Society for Human Resource Management. So we will be addressing rooms full of hundreds of H.R. executives on why to hire veterans, and how to hire them.

We are doing this with support from *Fortune* and *Forbes* and *Business Week* magazines, so employers are going to get the message as to why to hire veterans. We have commitments from *Business Week*, *Forbes* and *Fortune* to do that this year. One article on veterans employment is read by 30 million unique visitors out of Business Week.

The Federal hiring initiative—I know Director Berry will talk about that. We are now hiring more veterans into the Federal Government than ever before, and we have individuals whose sole job is to liaison with veterans, to make sure that they are hired in the most efficient, effective manner.

We have 2,000 employee representatives around America in our JVSG, Jobs for Veterans State Grant Program. They serve 624,000 veterans a year. We find jobs for 200,000 veterans and with our partners at ETA, that number goes up to 480,000. But there has been no internal assessment to look at how the program can be improved since it began in 2002.

So, we are doing an internal assessment right now to get ideas for best-practice improvements, number 1. Number 2, we are going to leverage IT to create an online community of practice so an employee representative in Washington State can share best practices with an employment representative in North Carolina or in Montana.

Our Job Corps pilot for the youngest veterans 20- to 24-years old, this is a fully-funded residential program. We will transport them to the site that will give them a lifelong license or credential or certificate, a job, and 21 months of post-employment support. We have 300 slots in the pilot. Job Corps serves 44,000 clients a year. So once we do proof of concept, we can increase the number of slots. We have over 120 enrolled now.

I would be grateful for this Committee's support to raise awareness of it in the communities to get the other 180 filled.

We also have a very effective rural veterans outreach pilot. We have launched that in Washington State. We were hoping to have 10 percent participation. That was our success metric. We have over 90 percent participation. Over 4,000 rural veterans are participating in that program. It is a tremendous success.

There is much more that we can talk about. I want to be respectful of my time. I look forward to answering your questions. There

is much more to do. We are trying to get all of it done as quickly as possible at VETS.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Jefferson follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF RAYMOND M. JEFFERSON, ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR VETERANS' EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

Chairman Murray, Ranking Member Burr, and Members of the Committee: Thank you for the opportunity to appear as a witness before the Committee and speak to you about Veterans' employment and what the Department of Labor's Veterans' Employment and Training Services (VETS) is doing to facilitate a smooth, efficient and effective transition of our Servicemembers and their spouses from the military into the civilian workforce.

VETS' mission is to proudly serve Veterans and transitioning Servicemembers by providing resources and expertise to assist and prepare them to obtain meaningful careers, maximize their employment opportunities and protect their employment rights. We do that through the following four major programs that are an integral part of Secretary Solis's vision of "Good Jobs for Everyone:"

- The Jobs for Veterans State Grants (JVSG);
- The Transition Assistance Program Employment Workshops (TAP);
- The Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program (HVRP); and
- The Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA).

VETS also continues to partner with the Employment and Training Administration (ETA) which shares goals for providing services to Veterans, including transitioning Servicemembers and eligible spouses through a variety of employment and training programs, which allows the opportunity to leverage resources for these populations.

Since being confirmed, I've incorporated stakeholder feedback into the development of five aspirations that VETS will pursue during my tenure as Assistant Secretary in order to achieve our desired outcomes:

1. Serving as the National focal point for Veterans' employment and training.
2. Increased engagement with employers, with a particular emphasis on the private sector.
3. Helping Servicemembers transition seamlessly into meaningful employment and careers, with a particular emphasis on emerging industries such as green jobs.
4. Boosting USERRA's impact by increasing awareness of and commitment to it.
5. Investing in VETS' team members to further develop their potential and better serve our clients.

Over the past year and a half, VETS has prioritized our efforts to transform TAP, implement a new approach to employer outreach, and better serve rural Veterans.

For the purposes of this hearing today, I would like to elaborate more on these efforts and other initiatives we have to assist our Servicemembers in transitioning from the military into the civilian workforce.

TRANSFORMING AND REDESIGNING THE TRANSITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Our primary program for assisting individuals with their transition is the Transition Assistance Program (TAP). TAP is an interagency program delivered via a partnership involving the Department of Defense (DOD), DOL VETS, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). TAP has four components:

1. Pre-separation counseling—this is mandatory for all transitioning Servicemembers and is provided by the military services;
2. TAP employment workshop—this is voluntary on the part of the transitioning Servicemember and is administered through DOL VETS and its state partners;
3. VA benefits briefing—this briefing is also voluntary and administered by the VA; and
4. Disabled Transition Assistance Program (DTAP)—also voluntary and administered by the VA.

Since 1991, when VETS began providing employment workshops pursuant to section 502 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1991 (P.L. 101–510), we've provided employment and job training assistance and other transitional services to over two and a half million separating and retiring Serve Members and their spouses. Our goal is to provide TAP at every location requested by the Armed Services or National Guard and Reserve Components.

VETS' employment workshop is a comprehensive two and a half day program during which participants are supposed to learn relevant skills and information, such

as job search techniques, career decisionmaking processes, and current labor market conditions. Practical exercises are conducted in resume writing and interviewing techniques. Participants are also provided an evaluation of their employability relative to the job market and receive information on the most current Veterans' benefits available. Components of the employment workshop include: career self-assessment, resume development, job search and interview techniques, U.S. labor market information, civilian workforce requirements and documentation of military skills.

The current workshop also includes discussion about additional services available at the over 3,000 One-Stop Career Centers. By connecting over 1.8 million Veterans to the workforce investment system this past program year, One-Stop Career Centers are helping to provide the support Veterans need to be successful and competitive in today's workforce. Building on this success, VETS partners with the ETA to increase Veterans' awareness of, access to, and use of the One-Stop service delivery system including ETA's suite of on-line electronic tools.

To maintain quality in service delivery and ensure uniformity among locations, all workshops use a common workbook and standard program of instruction. In addition, all facilitators are trained and certified by the National Veterans' Training Institute.

In the FY 2012 Budget proposal, VETS requests that the Transition Assistance Program be funded at $9,000,000, renewing our FY 2011 request to fund this as a separate activity. This is $2,000,000 above the level for FY 2010. VETS anticipates increased demand for TAP Employment Workshops in connection with the Department of Defense's Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program, and in providing workshops to retiring Reserve and National Guard members.

In the current TAP workshop, we have identified six primary opportunities for improvement. Therefore, VETS is taking the unprecedented step of completely redesigning and transforming the TAP employment workshop. We are creating experiential, effective, and enduring solutions for a successful transition from military to civilian life and employment. The new TAP is based on established best practices in career transition. Many of its components have never been a part of the employment workshop and are being introduced for the first time.

The first improvement opportunity we've identified is that the current TAP workshop does not include any type of assessment of an individual prior to a person attending the workshop. As a result, there is no customization to an individual's needs or readiness for employment. Presently, Servicemembers and other TAP participants (e.g., spouses) with different transition needs and degrees of employment readiness are all grouped together. As an example, when a senior non-commissioned officer with a bachelor's degree attends the same workshop as a junior enlisted member with a high school diploma, each has a different readiness level and transition needs. Therefore, to be most effective, the workshop content should be customized for each participant's employment readiness situation. Previously, there was no way to accomplish this goal. One solution could be "pre-work"—multiple employment-readiness assessments completed before attending TAP. The redesign will assess each individual's readiness for employment and their career interests before attending the workshop via online surveys. The pre-work process will then assess and place each TAP participant in one of three categories of employment readiness: 1) high, 2) moderate, and 3) entry-level. When a Servicemember attends TAP, they will so do with a cohort of peers at the same readiness level and, additionally, receive materials tailored to their specific level.

The second improvement opportunity we've identified is that the TAP Employment Workshop content is outdated—the material has not been significantly updated in 19 years. Therefore, the transformation and redesign will bring in best practice content in the area of career transition.

As a result of the pre-work assessment, the content will be customized based on employment readiness and will cover topics such as the following:

1. Life and career planning
2. Transitioning from a military to a civilian work environment
3. Stress reduction techniques
4. Mental resiliency training
5. How to create a network
6. Storytelling (articulating one's value proposition)
7. Peer-support techniques
8. Entrepreneurship.

Although TAP will continue to cover the traditional topics like resume writing, interviewing, and dressing for success, an important new emphasis in TAP will be the creation of an Individual Transition Plan that will serve as a roadmap for the "next steps" to be taken in each participant's transition to civilian employment.

The third improvement opportunity we've identified is that TAP is presently being facilitated by a mixed cadre with different skill levels and training (e.g. contractors, VETS Federal staff, State Disabled Veteran Outreach Program specialists, and Local Veterans Employment Representatives). Our solution to this is to shift to only using skilled and experienced contract facilitators who are trained to standards developed as part of the redesign. They will provide experiential learning and interactive facilitation that is customized to a participant's readiness level. This represents a significant shift away from a reliance on PowerPoint slides. Evidence has shown that skilled contract facilitators produce the best results of the current mix of TAP facilitators. Having the facilitator contracted directly to VETS will enhance their performance accountability.

The fourth improvement opportunity we've identified is the limitation in what the current TAP employment workshop can cover and who can attend. The solution to this is an online platform. The TAP transformation and redesign will include an online, e-learning platform that will contain the entire TAP Workshop—including the pre-work assessment tools—in an engaging, dramatized format and serve as a comprehensive toolbox for wounded warriors, spouses, Guard and Reservists. Having an online platform will allow Servicemembers, Veterans, and spouses to access all of the content provided in TAP, including the workshop, at any time. Additionally, it will provide comprehensive content on entrepreneurship and Federal employment. Furthermore, a Veteran who went through TAP many years ago—or who never went through it—can go online and access the best-practice content of the new TAP. Finally, this solution will allow us to receive feedback from online users and track how many there are.

The fifth improvement opportunity we've identified with the current program is that there are no follow-up services for its participants. Currently, when a transitioning Servicemember or spouse attends TAP, they leave with whatever they received in those two and a half days. Our solution to this is an innovation called "After-TAP Support." In the redesigned TAP, after attending a workshop, each participant will have 60-day access to individualized phone and online support with "live" person-to-person contact that will focus primarily on assisting participants with implementing their own Individual Transition Plan.

The sixth improvement opportunity we've identified is that TAP has no performance metrics to evaluate its effectiveness. During the 19 years since the TAP employment workshop has been in existence, we estimate that more than 2.5 million people have gone through the TAP program. However, there is no accumulated data measuring the program's effectiveness. Therefore the redesign will include performance metrics. The new program will gather evaluation input from TAP participants at "three moments of truth":

1. When the TAP Employment Workshop concludes—attendees will evaluate the delivery, content, resources, and setting;
2. During the job search process—attendees will evaluate the value and relevancy of the workshop's content; and
3. After becoming employed—attendees will evaluate the program's effectiveness in helping them to assimilate into a new culture, minimize the time it takes for them to begin contributing, and provide feedback on the overall value of the new TAP and its usefulness in obtaining a job.

EMPLOYER OUTREACH THROUGH JOBS FOR VETERANS STATE GRANTS PROGRAM

The Disabled Veteran Outreach Program (DVOP) and the Local Veterans Employment Representatives (LVER) program are known collectively as the Jobs for Veterans State Grants program (JVSG). Over time, the responsibilities of DVOPs and LVERs have merged. However, VETS realizes that their function and value are very different, and it is critical that these positions maintain their distinct roles.

DVOP specialists provide intensive employment services and assistance to meet the employment needs of eligible Veterans. DVOPs do this primarily at the Nation's One-Stop Career Centers funded through the Workforce Investment Act and at the VA's Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) offices. They also provide recovery and employment assistance to wounded and injured Servicemembers receiving care at Department of Defense military treatment facilities and Warrior Transition Units through the Recovery & Employment Assistance Lifelines (REALifelines) program. DVOPs focus their services on disabled Veterans. DVOPs also provide services through the Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program, Veterans' Workforce Investment Program, Transition Assistance Program, and the Incarcerated Veterans' Transition Program.

The LVER program is a State grant program authorized by Section 4104, Title 38, United States Code. LVER staff conduct outreach to employers and engage in

advocacy efforts with hiring executives to increase employment opportunities for Veterans, encourage the hiring of disabled Veterans, and generally assist Veterans to gain and retain employment. They are often members of One Stop Career Center business development teams. LVERs also conduct seminars for employers and job search workshops for Veterans seeking employment, and facilitate the provision of employment, training, and placement services to Veterans by all staff of the employment service delivery system. In addition, LVER staff seek to maintain cooperative working relationships with community organizations that provide complementary services and referral.

EMPLOYER OUTREACH THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS

VETS created, and is implementing, a new approach to employer outreach that involves a pilot program and partnership with the U.S. Chamber Of Commerce. The official launch of the program was October 1, 2010. This partnership is giving us much broader access to employers so that we can communicate the value of hiring a Veteran and how to access this extraordinary source of talent. It also allows us to educate employers about the unique skills Veterans bring with them based on their military experience.

Phase 1 of the pilot program included the formalized coordination, through a Memorandum of Understanding, between the U.S. Chamber's affiliated chambers of commerce in 14 states with our State Directors (DVETS) and local staff there. VETS and the U.S. Chamber's affiliates worked to connect Veterans seeking employment with companies who were hiring. Connecting the talent pool with the many companies looking to hire Veterans allowed for a more efficient hiring process for many Veterans and employers. We gained valuable information from Phase 1 of the pilot that we'll be applying to Phase 2, a nationwide initiative to help Veterans find jobs in local communities across the country.

In this pilot program, VETS works with Mr. Kevin Schmiegel, the U.S. Chamber's Vice President for Veterans Employment and a Veteran of the U.S. Marine Corps. Mr. Schmiegel has been a steadfast advocate of Veterans' employment and an enthusiastic proponent of both the pilot and VETS.

As part of the Chamber's commitment to VETS, they recently hosted a meeting with their Top 100 Chambers from across the country, with representation from all 50 states. During this meeting, the Chamber enlisted support from a vast majority of these Top 100 Chambers to volunteer to host hiring fairs exclusively for Veterans, transitioning Servicemembers and their spouses in their respective cities. In the partnership, the U.S. Chamber and its affiliates focus primarily on securing the participation of employers while the VETS team focuses on obtaining participation by Veterans, transitioning Servicemembers and their spouses. The DVETS, along with DVOPs and LVERs in hiring fair locales, connect with the local affiliated chambers participating to coordinate outreach to both employers and the Veteran community.

The larger hiring fairs are titled "Mega-Hiring Fairs." An example was Phase 2's kickoff hiring fair in Chicago on March 24, 2011 that connected over 100 employers with over 1,000 Veterans, Servicemembers and spouses. The Chicago hiring fair began Phase 2 of our pilot program—a nationwide initiative to help Veterans find jobs in local communities across the country. Participating employers must have current vacancies to fill in their organization. We are now working to replicate the Chicago Hiring Fair model with the remaining 99 of the Top 100 Chambers, and are finalizing locations and dates for future Mega-Hiring fairs. This pilot represents a new approach to employer outreach for VETS and is an effective and efficient way to connect employers and Veterans.

JOB CORPS

VETS and the Employment and Training Administration's (ETA) Job Corps program developed a demonstration project in June 2010 to offer additional educational and career technical training to Veterans and Transitioning Servicemembers at one of three specific Job Corps centers. These include the Earle C. Clements Job Corps Center in Morganfield, KY, Excelsior Springs Job Corps Center in Excelsior Springs, MO, and Atterbury Job Corps Center in Edinburgh, IN. Each of these three centers has 100 dedicated slots for Veterans to live and train together.

While Veterans currently benefit from priority enrollment into Job Corps, this partnership also provides them with priority in entering the academic and career technical training of their choice.

This is 100 percent free for enrolled Veterans. The program includes transportation to and from the Job Corps center, housing, meals, basic medical services, academic and career technical training, bi-weekly living allowance, job placement services and post-enrollment support.

We have worked with Job Corps to streamline the program so that it recognizes the maturity and life experience that our Veterans have gained from their military experience. Job Corps employs a comprehensive career development training approach that teaches academic, career technical, employability skills, and social competencies in an integrated manner through a combination of classroom, practical and work-based learning experiences to prepare participants for stable, long-term employment in high-demand jobs. Job Corps graduates have the opportunity to earn an industry-recognized certification or credential that supports the skills and knowledge gained through career training.

One of the Job Corps program's key benefits is its post-enrollment support. When Veterans are ready to begin transitioning into their career, Job Corps staff will assist them in job searching, resume drafting, and job interviewing skills.

Job Corps provides graduates with transition services for up to 21 months after graduation, including assistance with housing, transportation, and other support services. Upon completion of training, Veterans will be assigned to a career transition counselor to assist them with job placement or enrollment in higher education.

We have incorporated information about this demonstration project and have created outreach materials to be distributed in our TAP Employment Workshops all over the world. TAP facilitators discuss this initiative in class and Job Corps personnel visit selected sites to answer questions and initiate applications from interested Veterans. This is a great opportunity for Veterans 20 to 24 years old—the cohort with the highest unemployment—and we are utilizing various methods, including discussing it before this Committee today, in order to get the word out.

RURAL VETERANS OUTREACH PILOT PROGRAM

Finally, VETS is developing an innovative national initiative that will allow us and states to greatly improve outreach to rural Veterans; provide them access to better programs, services and information; and connect them to a wide variety of services. Rural service is a challenge governmentwide because of the cost of serving Americans that live a great distance away from government programs and infrastructure. During this economically difficult time, it is even more complicated to increase services in these areas. VETS' initiative aims to overcome this barrier by leveraging low cost volunteer capacity that exists in communities. VETS, working with state and local government, will provide the initial outreach to rural Veterans and proactively connect them to the workforce system.

VETS chose Washington State to be the first pilot state for this initiative for the following reasons:

1. A proven history of innovation in employment and Veteran programming;
2. A track record of providing strong employment services to the Veteran population and a commitment from the leadership in the state government to continue providing a high level of service to the state's large community of Veterans;
3. A strong network of Veteran service organizations committed to volunteering their time and energy to support their fellow Veteran;
4. A geographically diverse state with significant rural Veteran population and a well managed statewide network for launching a new initiative; and
5. Senior Congressional leadership in Washington, DC, and leadership in the Governor's Office have both expressed their support for this initiative.

The core service involves a team of volunteers who will initiate contact with Veterans, check on how their careers are going and, if needed, make them aware of additional support available from government and non-government organizations. The initiative is created to connect Veterans to Veteran specialists in the state workforce agency.

The pilot is working in 22 rural counties in Washington State, with approximately 40,000 Veterans identified in this area. Of this population, 15,000 have not been in contact with employment services in the last five years. This is the baseline for the outreach effort. Based on these numbers, VETS has identified approximately 5–20 community driven Veteran volunteers, and government funded volunteer organizations, to perform the outreach activities. Some volunteer organizations currently work in multiple counties and will be covering more than one county as a volunteer organization.

VETS has signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the Washington State Employment Security Department (ESD), the Washington Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA), and the Washington State National Guard (J–9). VETS formally launched the program in Seattle on October 26, 2010.

From December 2010 through March 2011, the Labor Market and Economic Analysis Division (LMEA), a division of the ESD, conducted outreach to Veterans and contacted all Veterans who positively responded to the LMEA outreach requesting

additional information on employment services. For those Veterans who requested additional information, LMEA will make up to three attempts to contact each of these Veterans to provide more information. Simultaneously, the WDVA, in conjunction with the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) organized volunteers, are mailing postcards to Veterans where there is no phone information available. This will allow the Veteran to contact LMEA to arrange personal contact.

As part of the model, the National Veterans Training Institute (NVTI) trains ESD employees and leaders from the volunteer organizations on how to provide outreach service to Veterans. Volunteer organizations are taught to understand government programs and provide employment program related information when asked. Also, they are trained in working from scripts created by LMEA on how to structure their conversations with Veterans.

LMEA will record which Veterans request additional support during the personal interview. They will provide this information to the State workforce agency who will coordinate a volunteer to provide this additional support in person.

The goal is to facilitate a meeting within three weeks of the outreach activity between the Veteran and the volunteer. The volunteer will provide information on programs that exist at the Federal, state and local level and contact information of the nearest DVOP or LVER in their area to continue the support until employment is found for the Veteran.

We have seen extremely positive results thus far in the program. Our metric for success was having 10 percent of the Veterans participate—their actual participation rate is in excess of 90 percent.

CONCLUSION

Chairman Murray, Ranking Member Burr, and Distinguished Members of the Committee on Veterans Affairs, I reaffirm my commitment to work closely with you, the outstanding team at VETS, and our partners and stakeholders to provide Veterans and transitioning Servicemembers the best possible services and programs. Our success will be measured by the impact our programs have on helping our Veterans find and keep good jobs in today's modern economy.

We will continue to work tirelessly and innovatively to help our Veterans and transitioning Servicemembers create meaningful lives, develop rewarding careers and become productive citizens and leaders in their communities.

Thank you again for your unwavering commitment to Veterans and for the support that you've been providing to us.

I appreciate the opportunity to testify before you today and look forward to answering your questions.

POSTHEARING QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. PATTY MURRAY TO HON. RAYMOND M. JEFFERSON, ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR VETERANS' EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

Question 1. In your oral testimony you discussed improvements to the Transition Assistance Program. One of the key components to improving TAP is the use of metrics to measure the outcomes of TAP. Do you intend to follow up with veterans once they have left the service to measure the success of TAP and gage what other employment assistance veterans may have?

Question 2. Please describe any work that has been done with state or national accrediting bodies in order to ease a servicemember's transition to civilian employment.

Question 3. As the agency statutorily responsible for job and job training intensive services program, an employment placement service program, and a job training placement service program for eligible veterans, how often does the Department of Labor's Veterans' Employment and Training Service coordinate meetings with other Agencies involved in veterans' employment and training? Please describe the nature of these meetings. How does VETS make certain that all Agencies are regularly and freely informing each other of new initiatives that involve veterans' employment and training?

POSTHEARING QUESTIONS FROM HON. RICHARD BURR TO HON. RAYMOND M. JEFFERSON, ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR VETERANS' EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

Question 1. In a recent report, the Government Accountability Office noted that "[l]ittle is known about the effectiveness of [Federal] employment and training programs * * * because only five reported demonstrating whether outcomes can be attributed to the program through an impact study." That report also notes that "[the Department of] Labor is conducting an impact evaluation of [certain] services, to be completed in 2015."

A. Are the programs administered by the Veterans' Employment and Training Service being evaluated as part of that study? If not, is there a separate impact study underway dealing with those veteran-specific programs?

B. If an impact study is being conducted with respect to employment programs targeting veterans, how many veterans who participate in each of those programs are expected to be involved in the study?

C. If an impact study is being conducted with respect to employment programs targeting veterans, what are the major milestones of that study and when will the study be completed?

Question 2. The Veterans' Employment and Training Service is involved with a number of new initiatives, including a demonstration project with Jobs Corps, outreach to rural veterans, and outreach to employers.

A. What performance measures are being used to gauge the usefulness of each of those initiatives?

B. HOW MUCH IN TOTAL HAS BEEN EXPENDED FOR PURPOSES OF THOSE INITIATIVES?

C. How many veterans have obtained jobs or better jobs as a result of these initiatives?

POSTHEARING QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. JON TESTER TO HON. RAYMOND M. JEFFERSON, ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR VETERANS' EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

Question 1. I was encouraged to see your office launch a pilot program that provided outreach to unemployed rural veterans. It's critically important that we get a better idea of what services they could best utilize to get back into the workforce. I've raised this issue with you in the past and I certainly think it's a step in the right direction. I understand the challenges that come with budgeting. But I'm still hopeful that Montana veterans have some input during this process. I think it's important.

• What are some of the early results of the pilot? What have you learned about ways we can better reach folks in frontier areas and reservations across the country? Because I can tell you that it's not currently being done.

Question 2. As you know, American Indians serve in our Armed Forces in greater numbers than any other ethnic group, proportionally. However in Montana, reservation unemployment rates often exceed 50 percent. We can improve that number if we can put vets to work in those communities.

• What are you doing to reach those folks? And when do you anticipate moving forward in developing a more comprehensive or national strategy to address rural veterans unemployment overall?

Question 3. I only have good things to say about the Disabled Veterans Opportunity Program specialists and the Local Veterans Employment Representatives in Montana. They provide a critical set of services to veterans across my state. The problem is that we don't have enough of them.

The current funding formula ensures that we only get a handful of employment trainers and counselors for a state as geographically large as the entire northeastern corridor of the United States. This reality makes it extremely difficult to adequately serve our veterans.

• Can you speak to any efforts in VETS to acknowledge the shortcoming of the funding formula issue? Are there any efforts underway to change this formula to better reflect the needs of rural veterans in states like Montana? How can we use better use technology to reach rural areas?

POSTHEARING QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. MARK BEGICH TO HON. RAYMOND M. JEFFERSON, ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR VETERANS' EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

Question 1. As you know, outreach to the Alaska Native community is best accomplished through the tribal entities.

- Can you discuss any specific outreach efforts that VETS has made to reach out to the Alaska Native veteran community?

Question 2. When you were in Alaska in February of last year, you mentioned that you wanted to explore the value of e-commerce for veterans in rural America. The concept you spoke of was for veterans to create internet-based home businesses.

- How is that concept progressing?

Question 3. You discussed the stovepipes inhibiting communications between the critical government agencies responsible for business development. You wanted to break down those stovepipes to bring organizations such as the Department of Commerce, Small Business Administration, and the Minority Business and Development Agency together to form a synergistic team.

- Do you feel you have been successful in accomplishing this goal?
- What areas of concern still remain?
- How can we help you in accomplishing this goal?

Question 4. In Alaska, there are around 1,500 servicemembers transitioning to the civilian sector each year.

- Has there been an evaluation of the effectiveness of the DOL' DVOPs?
- How much outreach outside of the office do they do?

Question 5. You stated during our Alaska field hearings last year that Alaska has 5–6 USERRA complaints a year. These types of issues are the last thing our returning veterans should have to deal with in the work place.

- What does VETS do to better educate prospective and current employers on USERRA?
- Are there issues with USERRA that Congress can address?
- Does this pose challenges that would have to be addressed by Congress?

[Responses were not received within the Committee's timeframe for publication.]

Chairman MURRAY. Thank you very much.

Mr. Berry?

STATEMENT OF HON. JOHN BERRY, DIRECTOR, U.S. OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

Mr. BERRY. Madam Chair, thank you, and Members of the Committee, if I could just go off the testimony for just a second. I told Eric Smith I want to meet with him before next Friday. My commitment to you is I will do everything I can to see if we could use him as a real face example of some of the programs I am going to talk to you about in more detail here in our testimony.

But it is crazy that we do not recognize medical expertise and talent when we are desperate. Just as you said Senator Tester, we cannot hire enough nurses in our hospitals around the country. We need to take full advantage of this and make sure we take the skills of these valued, experienced, and trained individuals and bring them into our government.

I asked Eric Smith if his schedule would allow, since I want to meet with him before next Friday to see if we could use him as the real case example to make this work and to show the Committee that we are passionate about this.

I want to thank you again for the opportunity to talk to you a little bit about the President's Veterans Employment Initiative that we are doing within the Federal Government. This is the most comprehensive high-level initiative ever to keep our returning heroes

in public service and our initial success for our first year is looking pretty encouraging.

In fiscal year 2010, we saw an improvement at 21 out of 24 agencies across the government. Overall, our agencies hired a total of over 2,000 more vets in 2010 than in fiscal year 2009, even while we hired 11,000 less Federal employees overall. The other important thing to note is of the vets who were hired, of our total of over 70,000 vets that were employed in the Federal Government, 2,700 more disabled vets were hired in fiscal year 2010, more than were than were in fiscal year 2009.

I also want to tell you I take this seriously. OPM is leading by example. I am very proud. OPM's first this year had the highest percentage of disabled vets hired in the entire Federal Government, more than DOD, more than VA, more than anybody, and we are a pretty small agency. So we take this seriously, and we are driving this.

A little history: the President launched this Veterans Employment Initiative by Executive Order in 2009. It provides the highest level of leadership on this issue in history. It creates a council chaired by Secretary Shinseki at the VA and Secretary Solis at Labor. I am the Chief Operating Officer of the council. Twenty-four agencies across the government are represented on the council.

The initiative also requires every agency in the government to set up a full-time veterans employment officer. That has never happened before. It has always been collateral duty, and therefore, as you know, that means it gets short shrift attention. We are now giving it full-time attention and that has created a network across the government so that if someone comes in to Labor, for example, who is an accountant, and Labor's slots are filled right now. That professional can call their counterparts in other agencies and say, "Boy, I have a super accountant here; do you have a slot?", and build that network of informal communication. We have been trying to do that. We are building that and it is growing. It is really wonderful.

The Web site which we launched this year, Fedshirevets.gov, has gotten over two million hits and is a wonderful, wonderful program. There is special hiring authorities for veterans. This Committee is familiar with this. We are using this as one of the easy avenues to get in. But we are also creating—and I wanted to spend a little bit of my remaining time to talk about two programs then get into more of the specifics of the first panel.

Recognizing that this transition is important, we are starting with two professions that have easily transferable skills, but the paperwork is standing in the way. The first is acquisition programs. We are in desperate need of contract officers and specialists in the Federal Government. We have people who are doing this is in the military and they are doing wonderful jobs of it. With the right training and right certification, we can slot them into these jobs.

So we have created a veterans acquisition intern program where they will come in at an entry-level program. We will employ them. They will have the time to be able to go and take the training courses and certification programs that they need to get into the program, and then they can be converted into the permanent Ca-

reer Civil Service and have a career trajectory that can go as high as GS–15.

So we are trying to create real jobs and bring people in at the GS–3, 4, 5 level, but give them a career trajectory so they would have a real opportunity in their life.

The second program, and it is very on point with the first panel, is we are doing the exact same thing with nursing, the nursing career track. We are trying to wrestle to the ground the certification program problem, because these people, as you heard so admirably and eloquently from the first panel, have got the skills. We just have to figure out how to transfer them in and make sure we do not let paperwork stand in the way.

Madam Chairman, I apologize, my time is expired. The rest of my testimony, I have it. I will give it to you and stand ready to answer any questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Berry follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. JOHN BERRY, DIRECTOR, U.S. OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

Madam Chair, Senator Burr, and Members of the Committee: Thank you for inviting me to this important hearing on veterans' employment in the Federal Government and for the chance to speak with you about the Office of Personnel Management's (OPM's) leadership of the Administration's Veterans Employment Initiative.

One of the best ways for us to honor the service of the brave men and women in our Armed Forces is to make sure they have ample opportunities for civilian employment in the Federal Government. They are valued, experienced, and trained. In doing so, we are not only demonstrating appreciation for their service and sacrifice; we are making it possible for the Nation to continue to benefit from their talents, dedication, and training. As I have said many times, hiring veterans makes good business sense.

VETERANS EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVE

Recognizing this, President Mama launched the Veterans Employment Initiative in November 2009, when he issued Executive Order 13518. The order created the Council on Veterans Employment to advise and assist the President on improving employment opportunities for veterans in the Federal Government. The Council is co-chaired by the Secretaries of Labor and Veterans Affairs. As Director of OPM, I serve as Vice Chair. Twenty-four agencies are represented on the Council.

More than a year ago, the Veterans Employment Council published the first ever Strategic Plan for Government-wide Veterans Recruitment and Employment. The Strategic Plan, which covers the period from FY 2010 through FY 2012, maps a comprehensive assault on barriers to veterans' employment in the areas of leadership commitment, skills development, marketing employment opportunities for veterans, and creation of a single-source information gateway for disseminating veterans' employment information.

One key action required by the executive order was the establishment of a Veterans Employment Program Office (VEPO) within each of the 24 agencies represented on the Council. The mission of each of these offices is to support the Veterans Employment Initiative and provide employment assistance to veterans at the agency level. OPM's VEPO provides a full range of support to transitioning servicemembers, other veterans—including disabled veterans—and their family members who seek information on employment in the Federal Government. In November 2010, the physical space for OPM's VEPO with assistive technology was officially opened to assist disabled veterans in their Federal job search.

PROGRESS IN VETERANS' EMPLOYMENT

The past year has yielded significant progress. Last September, the Council on Veterans Employment adopted a hiring model that established aggressive, but realistic, goals for veterans' hiring by agencies in the current fiscal year. At the most recent meeting of the Council last month, all agencies indicated they are making good progress toward meeting these goals. Executive branch agencies increased their hiring of veterans by a total of nearly 2,000 from FY 2009 to FY 2010, even

though their total hiring fell by 11,000 during that same period. Specifically, veterans' hiring grew from 70,170 in FY 2009 to 72,133 in FY 2010, which comprised more than a quarter of new hires in the executive branch. Moreover, agencies hired nearly 2,700 more disabled veterans in FY 2010 than in 2009. While the Governmentwide results are promising, more progress is needed.

OPM, as an agency, has worked hard to provide employment opportunities for veterans. We hired 229 veterans in FY 2010, compared to 171 veterans in FY 2009. In both years, veterans constituted approximately 27 percent of OPM's total new hires. In FY 2010, we hired 113 disabled veterans—41 more than in the previous year. Disabled veterans made up more than 13 percent of OPM's total new hires last year—more than any other agency's percentage of hires.

USE OF SPECIAL HIRING AUTHORITIES FOR VETERANS

We continue to encourage agencies to make full use of the various hiring authorities that can facilitate veterans' employment. For example, the Veterans Recruitment Act authorizes noncompetitive appointment for eligible veterans to positions up to the GS–11 level, or equivalent. The Veterans Employment Opportunities Act (VEOA) can be used to appoint those entitled to veterans' preference or veterans who have at least 3 years of active military service to permanent positions in the competitive civil service. Hiring of veterans under the VEOA increased from about 20,200 in 2009 to more than 20,750 in 2010. Veterans Recruitment Act appointments grew from 6,659 to nearly 7,000 during the same period, and the special hiring authority for veterans who are 30 percent or more disabled accounted for more than 2,000 hires last year, compared to 1,727 in 2009.

VETERANS ACQUISITION INTERN PROGRAM

One element of the Veterans Employment Initiative we are particularly excited about is the new Veterans Acquisition Intern Program, which we will launch later this year as a pilot. This is an inter-agency program designed to recruit student veterans and support their career development once they are hired. It will offer veterans who are students the opportunity to gain valuable on-the-job training and work experience in the acquisition field while continuing their education.

Those who are selected for the program will be assigned a mentor, and a robust Individual Development Plan will be used to track their progress. Upon completion of the program, these interns will be eligible for non-competitive conversion to permanent positions in the competitive civil service as contract specialists.

OPM will determine the eligibility criteria for this program and select applicants for agencies to consider. We will provide career counseling for applicants, establish metrics and an assessment process, approve each agency's implementation plan, and evaluate the program. If the Veterans Acquisition Intern Program is as successful as we hope, we will explore the possibility of extending the concept to other occupations. One of the most exciting features of this approach is that it offers veterans opportunities for careers in Government, not just jobs, and builds on the Government's investment in their military training and experience.

VETERANS NURSING CAREER TRACK INITIATIVE

During an OPM Veterans Service Organization (VSO) Coalition meeting last fall, several veteran representatives expressed concern over the difficulty they experienced trying to convert their military medical training and experience as Army medics or Navy Corpsmen to assist in their quest for employment as Federal nurses. Although several medical intake positions exist which easily allow a former medic or Corpsman to enter the medical field based on their level of training and experience, these positions were not in the Federal nursing series such as Registered Nurse (RN) (0610) or Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) (0620).

On March 29, 2011, OPM hosted a mini-summit of representatives from Federal agencies, military medical organizations, credentialing bodies, and academia to identify and address issues affecting transitioning servicemembers and veterans seeking Federal nursing positions in order to create an effective career track for veterans. During the forum, the VA stated that it hires LPNs who are provided an opportunity to finish their Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree to become an RN. This program may serve as an excellent vehicle to bring young medics and Corpsmen into Federal service while they complete their academic studies. This information is very encouraging as we assist more veterans in securing Federal nursing positions in this mission-critical area.

VETERANS EMPLOYMENT TRAINING MODULES

The executive order establishing the Veterans Employment Initiative required OPM to develop mandatory training for human resources personnel and Federal hiring managers on veterans' employment, including veterans' preference and special hiring authorities. We are currently developing an interactive web-based E-Learning application on veterans' employment, which will enable us to track the progress of those who take the courses. The training will cover veterans' preference, special hiring authorities for veterans, non-competitive appointment eligibility for military spouses, and the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA).

HIRING REFORM AND VETERANS

More than two years ago, we embarked on a broad initiative to reform the entire Federal hiring process. Along the way, we have attempted to address broad systemic problems such as reducing long job announcements and allowing resumes and. cover letters as applications. However, where appropriate, we have taken on targeted approaches, as with veterans' employment, to improving the recruitment and hiring of talented men and women to represent the diversity of our Nation and our workforce. This intersection of these various reform initiatives is creating a veterans-friendly employment environment that is unmatched in the private sector.

Hiring Reform, at large, has several major components, all of which, in one way or another, create opportunities to improve veterans' employment. The President issued a memo to make the process easier for talented candidates to apply for Federal employment. Veterans can now navigate the process with greater ease and ensure their veteran's preference is applied fairly and consistently.

Additionally, I am proud of the work OPM and other Federal agencies have done in implementing President Obama's executive order on hiring more people with disabilities. As many members of the military return from combat with serious disabilities, it is our duty as an employer to create opportunities for these men and women to transition into Federal employment.

The Student Pathways framework is another significant part of Hiring Reform. The Student Pathways Initiative, like the Veterans Employment Initiative, was launched by President Obama in an executive order. Executive Order 13562 of December 27, 2010, established three streamlined pathways into Federal service for students and recent graduates, consolidating a confusing patchwork of programs into one Internship Program, a Recent Graduates Program, and the Presidential Management Fellows Program. We expect to issue proposed regulations implementing this initiative in the near future.

The Student Pathways framework was the product of an inter-agency study spearheaded by OPM, which concluded that the Government was at a serious competitive disadvantage compared to the private sector in its ability to recruit and hire students and recent graduates. The inter-agency team recommended the consolidated pathways approach as a way to overcome this disadvantage. The Internship Program will target students enrolled in institutions at all levels, ranging from high school to doctoral programs. The Recent Graduates Program will be designed for recent graduates of trade and vocational schools, community colleges, and universities. The Presidential Management Fellows Program will include modest enhancements to the current leadership development program for advance degree candidates. Veterans' preference will apply to selections made under all three of the pathways.

The Recent Graduates Program, in particular, can be helpful to veterans in gaining access to Federal employment. It will target recent graduates of trade and vocational schools, community colleges, universities, and other qualifying institutions. This program will be open to those who apply within two years after completing their degrees; however, veterans who cannot apply within the two-year window because of their military service obligation will be able to apply as much as six years after finishing their degrees. Applicants who are accepted into the Recent Graduates Program will be placed in a two-year development program with a cohort of peers hired during timeframes aligned with academic calendars. Those who successfully complete the program will be considered for placement into permanent jobs.

Our simultaneous pursuit of four major initiatives demonstrates that many overlapping goals can be pursued in concert.

SPECIAL APPOINTMENT ELIGIBILITY FOR MILITARY SPOUSES

Our concern is not only for returning veterans who are seeking jobs, but also for the spouses of those permanently disabled or killed during military service. Just last month, OPM published a proposed regulation to extend a special hiring authority

for spouses of deceased and 100 percent disabled veterans. Currently, these spouses may be appointed, without competition, to a Federal job within two years after their spouse dies or becomes fully disabled. However, we recognize that many spouses are not prepared to enter the workforce during this two-year period because they are still grieving, or are enrolled in educational or training programs, or may be caring for children or for their disabled spouse. The change we recently proposed will remove the two-year time limit on this appointment eligibility so that these spouses will have as much time as they need to consider seeking employment in the Federal Government.

FEDSHIREVETS.GOV

Finally, I wanted to tell you about a special Web site for veterans. In January 2010, FedsHireVets.gov became operational to support the information needs of transitioning servicemembers, veterans, and military spouses seeking employment in the Federal Government. Besides posting updates on important Veterans Employment Initiative activities, the Web site provides useful information on veterans' preference, special veterans appointing authorities, and agency-specific Veteran Employment Program Manager contact data. A special feature of the Web site provides answers to Frequently Asked Questions and offers an opportunity to ask a question not addressed. Additionally, the associated Facebook and Twitter accounts promote real time social contact on employment opportunities and special events. Since its creation, FedsHireVets.gov has registered well over 1 million hits.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, I would say that our Veterans Employment Initiative is off to a great start. We are pleased with the initial progress we have made, both within OPM and working with the other agencies on the Veterans Employment Council. We are building a strong program to enhance employment opportunities for veterans, which we believe can serve as a model for private sector employers as well. Although we know we have accomplished a great deal in a short time, we are also very aware of how much work lies ahead, and we are eager to take it on.

Again, I appreciate your inviting me here today. I would be happy to respond to any questions you may have.

RESPONSE TO POSTHEARING QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON.RICHARD BURR TO HON. JOHN BERRY, DIRECTOR, U.S. OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

Question 1. Executive Order 13518 established the Veterans Employment Initiative to help increase the number of veterans employed by the Federal Government and required each of the 24 Chief Human Capital Officers Act agencies to create a Veterans Employment Program Office.

A. What specific functions are performed by those offices?

Response. Executive Order 13518 requires agency Veterans Employment Program Offices to do the following:

- Enhance employment opportunities for veterans within their respective agencies
- Develop and implement the agency's Operational Plan
- Establish veterans recruitment programs
- Establish, as appropriate, training programs for disabled veterans
- Coordinate job opportunities for veterans
- Provide employment counseling to support the career aspirations of veterans

B. What performance measures are used to determine whether these offices are effective?

Response. In September 2010, the Council on Veterans Employment approved a hiring percentage model to assess the effectiveness of the Veterans Employment Initiative.

Each agency established a hiring percentage goal using this model for Total Veteran New Hires and Total Disabled Veteran New Hires for FY 2011.

The Veteran Employment Program Office is a key enabler for the agency in meeting their hiring goal.

Attached, please find a memorandum I issued to the Council on Veterans Employment, which includes a tiered model which will guide agency goal setting based on the agency's FY 2009 percentage of Veterans hired.

C. Have any performance metrics been collected regarding these offices? If so, please provide a summary of the performance of those offices. If not, what is the time-frame for beginning to collect performance statistics?

Response. Agency veteran hiring percentage goals for FY 2011 are based on their FY 2009 veterans' employment data which serves as the baseline. Government-wide veteran employment data is typically available after the second quarter following the close of the fiscal year. This data will be released and posted on Fedshirevets.gov.

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WASHINGTON, DC 20415

SEP 2 0 2010

MEMORANDUM FOR COUNCIL ON VETERANS EMPLOYMENT

From: John Berry
Vice Chair, Council on Veterans Employment

Subject: Performance Goals for the Veterans Employment Initiative

As part of the President's Executive Order on the *Employment of Veterans in the Federal Government*, the Council on Veterans Employment is required to establish performance goals to assess the effectiveness of the Veterans Employment Initiative. During our June 29th Council meeting, we discussed a hiring percentage model (attached) as a way to establish these goals. I am pleased to inform you that the model was adopted formally at the September 16 Council meeting.

This tiered model will guide agency goal setting based on your FY 2009 percentage of Veterans hired. Agencies will establish percentage goals using this model for the Total Veteran New Hires and the Total Disabled Veteran New Hires for FY 2011 and report these goals to Joseph Kennedy, Executive Director of the Council on Veterans Employment, by September 30, 2010. Based on the FY 2011 results, agencies will establish their FY 2012 goals in September 2011.

These percentage goals are aggressive and may necessitate adjustments to your Veterans employment strategies as outlined in your agency operations plans. However, agency actions designed to meet these goals must comply with all applicable Federal hiring laws, rules, and regulations and merit system principles. Please review and revise your plans accordingly and resubmit them to OPM by October 15, 2010. If you would like support in revising your operations plan or formulating strategies to meet your goals, please contact your agency's OPM Human Capital Officer. In addition, the Steering Committee agencies will also make staff available to support your efforts.

Much has been accomplished over the past year. In the first half of the FY alone, we have seen an increase in the number and percentage of Veterans hired. We have also developed a Government-wide strategic plan and built an infrastructure for a successful Veterans Employment Initiative. Each of you should be proud of your agency's efforts. As we approach the one year anniversary of the signing of Executive Order 13518, these accomplishments reflect your ongoing commitment to this important initiative, but more importantly, to our Nation's Veterans.

If you have any questions, please contact Joseph Kennedy at Joseph.Kennedy@opm.gov or (202) 606-5181.

cc: Council on Veterans Employment Designees
Chief Human Capital Officers
HR Directors
Veteran Employment Program Office Managers

Chairman MURRAY. All of your testimony will be included in the record, so thank you very much.

Mr. Campbell.

STATEMENT OF JOHN R. CAMPBELL, DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE, WOUNDED WARRIOR CARE AND TRANSITION POLICY, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

Mr. CAMPBELL. Good morning, Chairman Murray, Ranking Member Burr, and Senator Tester. Thank you for the opportunity to be

here this morning with Director Berry and Assistant Secretary Jefferson from Labor.

I am pleased to discuss the role DOD plays in helping servicemembers successfully transition from active duty to civilian life. The department focuses on providing separating servicemembers useful information, resources, and assistance in all aspects of the transition process, including, but not limited to preparation for post-military employment. It is crucial to the transition process that servicemembers take advantage of their military experience in order to achieve their full employment potential after they leave the military.

The Transition Assistance Program, better known as TAP, is a collaborative effort among DOD, the Department of Labor, Veterans Affairs, and Homeland Security. It remains the primary platform used to deliver an extensive array of services and benefits to separating servicemembers. However, we recognize the current program has been in place for nearly two decades without major enhancements.

To strengthen and improve TAP for the 21st Century, each agency, Defense, Labor, and Veterans Affairs, is improving its component of TAP through a number of initiatives. We are leveraging technology, modernizing curriculum, improving field staff training, and developing ways to improve access to information relating to a successful transition.

Although the traditional brick and mortar classrooms will still be available, I am really excited about how we are moving TAP into a virtual setting. We started a virtual learning series on March 1 of this year. Five hundred thirty-one individuals have registered for six webinars. We have had an additional 177 registered for May and the May schedule has only been available since April 1.

On a personal note, I actually participated in one last week. We had over 100 participants. It started at 8 a.m., ran for an hour. It was all about resume writing. I would invite any Member of the Committee or any member of the staff to participate in further webinars. Those are really powerful.

That is the great thing about technology. We are not bound by the constraints of the more traditional learning environments. We can also reach more people at the same time. A major part of our use of technology and the movement to a virtual TAP environment is the Career Decision Toolkit. The toolkit, in both CD and online format, is a cornerstone of transforming TAP into a blended career transition training tool. It takes advantage of online digital resources, virtual classrooms, and social media that compliment the traditional brick and mortar TAP classes. A copy of the CD with accompanying fact sheet has been provided to each Member of the Committee.

DOD and the military services have also significantly increased their focus on licensure and certification by providing such information in a wide range of ways and in different formats to appeal to individual learning styles. For example, the Career Decision Toolkit contains a wealth of information on both. A key component of effective licensure and certification is introducing the information to the servicemember early in their careers, not just at the time of

separation. Waiting until the end of military service to educate the war fighter on licensure and certification is too late.

Our servicemembers have unlimited access to online credentialing and credentialing opportunities and information from a COOL Web site created by the Army and the Navy. COOL is Credentialing Opportunities Online. Our airmen have similar opportunities provided by the Air Force called CERT, Credentialing and Education Research Tool. These resources are used in concert with military education and training opportunities throughout the military life cycle. Key efforts include analysis to identify potential gaps between military training and civilian credentialing requirements, along with providing extensive information on resources available to fill those gaps. I am pleased to see that the States like Washington and Utah are making great progress legislatively in recognizing military training in the certification and licensing process.

In closing, I would like to emphasize that the end State for the enhanced TAP of the 21st Century will be servicemembers having the knowledge, skills and abilities to empower themselves to make informed career decisions, be competitive in the global marketplace and become positive contributors to their community as they transition from military to civilian life.

The measure of a successful transition does not focus solely on TAP, but rather is shared with military leadership at every level within the command structure and degree of personal involvement by the servicemember and his or her family.

Madam Chair, this concludes my statement. On behalf of the men and women of the military today and the families, I thank you and the Members of the Committee for your steadfast support and leadership in this area. I will be happy to answer any questions you and the Committee members might have at this time.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Campbell follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF JOHN R. CAMPBELL, DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE (WOUNDED WARRIOR CARE AND TRANSITION POLICY), U.S. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

Madam Chairman and Members of the Committee: Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the role the Department of Defense (DOD) plays in helping Servicemembers successfully transition from active duty to civilian life. Education and training are keys to obtaining meaningful employment and a better quality of life after a Servicemember retires or separates from the military. Servicemembers are encouraged to take full advantage of all educational opportunities and training programs afforded while they are on active duty, such as tuition assistance and the Post-9/11 GI Bill. The Department also focuses on providing separating Servicemembers useful information and assistance in all aspects of the transition process, including preparation for post-military employment. It is crucial to the transition process that Servicemembers take full advantage of their military experience in order to reach and achieve their full employment potential after they leave the military.

TRANSITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (TAP)

TAP is a collaborative partnership among DOD, the Departments of Labor (DOL), Veterans Affairs (VA), and Homeland Security (DHS) and remains the primary platform used to deliver an extensive array of services and benefits information to separating Servicemembers. Servicemembers are required by statute to commence preseparation counseling no later than 90 days prior to active duty separation but are strongly advised and encouraged to start the process 12 months before separation, or 24 months before retirement. In addition to the mandatory pre-separation counseling, DOD counselors make every effort to encourage transitioning Service-

members to participate in the voluntary TAP components (which are VA's Benefits Briefing, Disabled Transition Assistance Program (DTAP) and DOL's TAP Employment Workshop). Each agency is responsible for providing its portion of TAP to Servicemembers.

Taking full advantage of what TAP has to offer enables Servicemembers to be strong competitors for career opportunities in the civilian workforce. During mandatory pre-separation counseling, Servicemembers review and complete an extensive checklist with a counselor. After Servicemembers complete the pre-separation counseling portion of TAP, they receive a copy of the checklist (DD Form 2648 for Active Duty and DD Form 2648–1 for the National Guard and Reserves) so they can refer back to it and look up web sites and other information to reinforce what they received during the pre-separation counseling session. The checklists have all the topics required by statute that a counselor must address during the pre-separation counseling session. The forms are used by separating Servicemembers and their spouses to record that pre-separation counseling was conducted.

If the Servicemember desires more information on any topic on the pre-separation counseling checklist, that exceeds the general knowledge of the counselor, then the member checks a "YES" block next to the item on the form, and the counselor refers the Servicemember to a subject matter expert who is able to assist the member with the desired information, or get the answers to questions which the transition counselor may not have been able to answer. The subject matter expert may be a family support transition or education counselor located at the installation, or it may be a DOL or VA representative who provides TAP support at the installation.

During pre-separation counseling, the counselor is required to explain and discuss "Licensing, Certification and Apprenticeship Information" with transitioning Servicemembers. Additionally, Servicemembers are always encouraged to do research on the internet and it is recommended they start with CareerOneStop, the DOL web site on exploring careers, salary and benefits, education and training, resume and interviews, and licensure and certification (http://www.careeronestop.org). The Workforce Credentials Information Center, within the America's Career InfoNet part of this site, provides a wealth of licensure and certification information. The member can also access the Occupational Information Network called O*NET (www.onlineonetcenter.org) and the skills profiler which also falls under the purview of our partners at DOL. This site is considered the Nation's primary source of occupational and industry information. Using O*NET allows the Servicemember to do a crosswalk between his or her Military Occupational Code and the civilian equivalency of that code, linking the member to the Standard Occupational Classifications in the civilian workforce.

The information received during the pre-separation counseling portion of TAP is reinforced during the other three voluntary components of TAP: DOL's TAP Employment Workshop, VA's Benefits Briefing, and the Disabled Transition Assistance Program (DTAP). National Guard and Reserve personnel receive a Uniformed Services Employment and Re-Employment Rights Act (USERRA) briefing during demobilization processing. DOL has notified each state's Adjutant General of the opportunity to receive TAP employment workshops whenever and wherever desired. Transitioning Servicemembers, including National Guard and Reserve personnel, are strongly encouraged to visit one of approximately 3,000 DOL One-Stop Career Centers, where they receive priority service consisting of help with translating their military skills to civilian occupations, receiving a skills assessment, and getting assistance in finding a job. In addition to receiving information on licensure and certification, Servicemembers can also receive information on apprenticeship resources.

ENHANCED TAP FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

Initially developed in the late 1980s and implemented in the early 1990s, the current program has been in place for nearly two decades without major enhancements. To strengthen and improve TAP, DOD, DOL and VA are collaborating to re-engineer, redesign, and transform the current program in a way that will better meet the needs of Servicemembers and their families in the 21st Century. The "enhanced TAP" is a collaborative effort where each agency will improve its component of TAP through a number of initiatives, to include leveraging technology, improving curriculum, better staff (counselors/facilitators, etc.) training, and developing ways to access TAP so that the information is accessible 24/7.

DOD is moving TAP from an end of military career event to a military lifecycle process. We are developing a robust blended delivery of TAP information and services via online, brick and mortar, and multi-media. An example of this is Virtual TAP, an online delivery system that will allow Servicemembers and their families to access and receive information on education, scholarships, employment, fi-

nancial and career planning, and other transition-related areas any time. A major part of Virtual TAP is the Career Decision Toolkit, which can be accessed at www.turbotap.org. The toolkit, in both CD and online format, is a cornerstone of transitioning TAP into a blended career transition training model that takes advantage of online and digital resources, virtual classrooms, social media and other platforms that compliment the traditional "brick and mortar" TAP classes that most Servicemembers now attend.

We are also improving staff training to better inform Servicemembers of the benefits, resources and enhanced online tools available, as well as to improve the experience of Servicemembers attending the traditional "brick and mortar" sessions which will still be available. Increased use of social media will also enhance DOD's ability to connect with the 21st Century Servicemember.

In addition to DOD's efforts, DOL is redesigning and transforming its TAP Employment Workshop to make it more relevant to Servicemembers and spouses. VA's re-engineering initiative involves a three phase effort to develop a self-serve, online mechanism for Servicemembers to have the option of completing the VA benefits briefing electronically within their own timeframe prior to discharge. DOL will speak more to their redesign of TAP for the 21st Century in their testimony.

OTHER EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVES

Operation Warfighter (OWF)

OWF is a DOD-sponsored internship program that offers recuperating wounded, ill and injured Servicemembers meaningful activity that positively impacts wellness and offers a process of transitioning back to duty or entering into the civilian workforce. The main objective of OWF is to place recuperating Servicemembers in supportive work settings that positively benefit the recuperation process.

OWF represents a great opportunity for transitioning Servicemembers to augment their employment readiness by building their resumes, exploring employment interests, developing job skills, benefiting from both formal and on-the-job training opportunities, and gaining valuable Federal Government work experience that will help prepare them for the future. The program strives to demonstrate to participants that the skills they have obtained in the military are transferable into civilian employment. For Servicemembers who will return to duty, the program enables these participants to maintain their skill sets and provides the opportunity for additional training and experience that can subsequently benefit the military. OWF simultaneously enables Federal employers to better familiarize themselves with the skill sets of wounded, ill and injured Servicemembers as well as benefit from the considerable talent and dedication of these transitioning Servicemembers.

To date, the program has placed approximately 1,800 Servicemembers across more than 100 different Federal employers and sub-components. The program currently has 390 active internship placements.

The Veterans Employment Initiative (VEI)

The VEI, created by Executive Order 13518, aims to aggressively enhance recruitment strategies and promote employment opportunities which will lead to an increase in the number of veterans in the Federal Government. DOD is a strategic partner on the Steering Committee for this initiative, along with the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), VA, DOL, and DHS. The Order established an interagency Council on Veterans Employment that advises the President and the Director of OPM on the initiative. The Council serves as a national forum to promote veterans' employment opportunities in the executive branch and develops performance measures to assess the effectiveness of the VEI. DOD implemented an agency-specific DOD Veterans Strategic Plan, which includes performance measures and expected outcomes. Agencies covered by the VEI have established Veterans Employment Program Offices or designated a full-time staff person dedicated to providing employment services to veterans. The DOD Veterans Employment Program Office assists Veterans with navigating the application process in their search for employment. Veterans and the public may also access the VEI's helpful Web site at www.fedshirevets.gov.

Education and Employment Initiative (E2I)

Contributing factors to unemployment among wounded warriors include the lack of a focused employment, educational, and rehabilitation process that engages Servicemembers as soon as they begin treatment at a Medical Treatment Facility (MTF), as well as a lack of qualified career counselors who can administer career assessments and match Servicemembers to careers. DOD, in collaboration with VA, DOL, and the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), is developing E2I to address these shortfalls. E2I will leverage best practices and the good work already being

done from existing employment and training initiatives in both Federal and private sectors. The first phase is a tiered pilot program scheduled to launch in May 2011.

The goal of the E2I pilot is to engage Servicemembers early in their recovery to identify skills they have, the skills they need and the employment opportunities where those skills can be matched and put to good use. The E2I process will begin within 30–90 days of a Recovering Servicemember (RSM) arriving at a MTF, taking advantage of a recovery time that averages 311 days but can be as long as five years. At the very beginning of the E2I process, all applicants will be administered a comprehensive skills assessment to include understanding their current disability, current Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) experience, career desires, education and training background, and special accommodations that may be required for a particular type of position. This assessment will be provided by a highly trained career and vocation counselor who has extensive knowledge of the issues facing wounded warriors.

The E2I counselor will work with the RSM from the initial stages of creating an individual development plan (IDP) goal setting, course selection or education requirements, through the completion of training/certification to return to duty or alternate job placement. A Mentor and Coach will be assigned to all E2I applicants at the beginning of the process to provide personalized assistance and guidance throughout the E2I process from recruitment at the MTF into the program, through placement in their new MOS or chosen career.

Our plan is to evaluate the E2I program over the next 12 months to 18 months and refine the E2I process with new ideas and best practices. Once this evaluation is complete, our plan is to continue our E2I roll-out, which will include partnering with OPM, VA and DOL to ensure we have standardized practices and comprehensive handoffs as the RSM leaves the responsibility of the DOD.

CONCLUSION

The Department understands there is a strong consensus within Congress and the Veterans' community that more needs to be done to help Servicemembers successfully transition to civilian life. There are proponents who believe DOD should be responsible for finding jobs for transitioning Servicemembers. However, we do not believe that is an appropriate role of DOD. Rather our responsibility, which we take very seriously, is to help prepare transitioning Servicemembers to find a job by connecting them to the vast resources of the DOL and VA Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Services which have dedicated programs and training to help transitioning Servicemembers find employment. As we empower Servicemembers to take charge of their transition, we must recognize that their success rests largely on their implementation and utilization of the skills, tools, and resources made available to them, starting with pre-separation counseling and continuing throughout the transition process. The success is further reinforced by active engagement, reinforcement, and motivation by unit/command leadership.

The measure of a successful transition does not focus solely on TAP, but rather is shared with military leadership at every level within the command structure and the degree of personal involvement by the Servicemember and his or her family. We must continue to find new ways to not only reach our Servicemembers and provide useful information to them, but also to strive to ensure they are armed and prepared to address all the various challenges and opportunities in their transition to civilian life. It is through their success that we measure ours and continually look for better ways to provide the help they need.

In summary, the end-state for the enhanced TAP for the 21st Century by DOD, DOL, and the VA will consist of a population of Servicemembers who have the knowledge, skills, and abilities to empower themselves to make informed career decisions, be competitive in the global workforce and become positive contributors to their community as they transition from the military to civilian life. Madam Chairman, this concludes my statement. On behalf of the men and women in the military today and their families, I thank you and the Members of this Committee for your steadfast support.

POSTHEARING QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. PATTY MURRAY TO JOHN R. CAMPBELL, DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR WOUNDED WARRIOR CARE AND TRANSITION POLICY, DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

Question 1. Why is additional legislation in order for the Services to provide certification of a servicemember's specific military training and experience prior to discharge?

Question 2. Why is DOD relying on each service to make TAP mandatory, rather than making TAP mandatory for all services?

Question 3. I am interested in more information on the Education and Employment Initiative pilot program you describe in your written testimony. Have you chosen test sites where the program will launch in May 2011? How do you plan to evaluate the success of this program? Your written testimony signals your plan to continue rolling out the program after only 18 months, even though you say that the average recovery time is 311 days but can be as long as five years. Given that there may not be enough participants who have completed the program to do a complete study, how can you be sure that it can be successfully replicated at all sites?

[Responses were not received within the Committee's timeframe for publication.]

Chairman MURRAY. Thank you very much to all three of you for your testimony. I love your enthusiasm and cheerleading and great words, but I got to tell you, 27 percent of our veterans ages 20 to 24 are unemployed. Senator Burr mentioned the word "accountability" in making sure that things are working and I have to just say I am—Secretary Jefferson, when you came in and we confirmed you, I think it was a year and a half ago, I loved the enthusiasm, but I want to see it translated into something that is not 27 percent of our veterans who are 20- to 24-years old are unemployed.

You heard the panel in front of us. You have heard the frustration. I hear it everywhere I go. I am positive every one of my colleagues here has heard it. It is not right that somebody comes out of the military and faces the issues that they do today. Yeah, it is a tough economy, but 27 percent? That is just unacceptable.

So Secretary Jefferson, let me start with you.

At your confirmation hearing, you said success was going to be measured by the impact the programs have helping veterans. How can we be here a year and one-half later and we are looking at these high numbers of unemployment?

Mr. JEFFERSON. Sure. Madam Chairman, I think that is exactly because the problems that we are dealing with have taken place over a period in some cases of 20 years and we are on track to address all of them by Veterans Day this year. Over the last 18 months, let me just start with the TAP program. That program was extremely broken, so I wanted to first figure out what are all the problems, what are the best solutions for those problems, and then to implement those.

As an example, two and a half million people have gone through TAP. There is not one performance metric. So we are on track to have that contract awarded on June 6. That is our projected date.

Chairman MURRAY. The contract awarded to do what?

Mr. JEFFERSON. The contract for the new TAP.

The entire redesign and transformation of our Transition Assistance Program, we are planning to award that on June 6—that is our projected timeline now as of today—and to have the new class starting by Veterans Day, Madam Chairman.

Chairman MURRAY. So veterans will be participating in that new TAP program?

Mr. JEFFERSON. Yes, Madam Chairman. Our goal is for the new class, for the servicemembers to go into the new class of TAP by Veterans Day this year. It has taken 20 years. The program has been outdated for 20 years. We are working to get that done this year by Veterans Day, and measure the outcomes.

Chairman MURRAY. OK, we want to see that.

Mr. JEFFERSON. Yes.

Chairman MURRAY. I mean, it has been a long, slow process and we need to see more results from that.

Mr. JEFFERSON. Yes, Madam Chairman.

Chairman MURRAY. So I appreciate that.

Mr. Campbell, we heard from witnesses on the first panel that servicemembers do not get proof of certification, that they receive training and perform medical procedures during their time in the military, and we saw without just that piece of paper in their hand that says they did what they did and it is real, they cannot get a job.

Can the Department of Defense make that information available to a servicemember when they are discharged so that they have some kind of piece of paper saying that they did what they did that actually relates to the civilian world?

Mr. CAMPBELL. I believe that we can.

Chairman MURRAY. What is the barrier? Does Congress need to pass legislation? Does the military just need to do it? What is the barrier to that happening? Because this is not new. I do not think any of us are hearing this for the first time. We have been hearing it since soldiers first started coming back from Iraq.

Mr. CAMPBELL. Yes, ma'am. We are probably going to need to have some legislation to make that work. We do not at present have the capability to provide more than we do on the DD–214, and so if there is some legislation that would change that to put more information on there that would allow the States to take a look at what the extent of the experience of these young men and women are, that would be one answer.

Mr. BERRY. Madam Chair, could I add to this as well? It may be that these intern programs that we are setting up, and I think specifically the nursing one especially, because we have found that these certification programs and—you know, we want to be careful. We are not saying that we are asking to lower the bar for anybody. These folks can meet the bar, we just need to make sure that their training counts, and that if there are gaps, we can fill in those gaps and make sure we fill them in.

So I think what is going to be important in this, especially the nursing intern program, is that if legislation is needed, where would it have the most targeted impact? So, my commitment to you is we will keep in touch with you and your staff and as we move forward on that program, if we find the weak spots, it may be that we can collaborate the sort of State and Federal certifications that can solve this without the need for more law.

But if we can't, then we will certainly identify for you where those changes would be in order.

Chairman MURRAY. How long will that take?

Mr. BERRY. This program is underway this year. We are working with the VSOs right now, with VA, Labor, and DOD, and I think we will have the learning experience this year to be able to inform, to get back to the Committee on if we need additional legislation in that area.

Chairman MURRAY. Well, Mr. Campbell, let me go back to you. Can the Department of Defense certify that someone actually per-

forms medic—does the actual classes and does medic work or anything, can the Department of Defense certify? Can we get them to move to doing that?

Mr. CAMPBELL. Sure. [Pause.]

I am told that we cannot certify that.

Chairman MURRAY. OK.

Mr. JEFFERSON. Madam Chairman, can I make a comment about the role of TAP?

Chairman MURRAY. Yes.

Mr. JEFFERSON. I respectfully disagree with a member of the previous panel. After doing a lot of due diligence on this, we feel that it is important that the servicemembers participate in TAP as early as possible prior to their transition. One of the reasons is we are revamping the new TAP to make it a one-stop solution for everything to a primary portal for entrepreneurship training, resources, et cetera, and also to make it a resource for apprenticeships.

So as servicemembers come to TAP, they are going to get awareness on what are the apprenticeship and credentialing needs they have.

There is already a COOL——

Chairman MURRAY. Are you referring to the testimony about having it within 90 days?

Mr. JEFFERSON. Yes, that is exactly what I am referring to, Madam Chairman. So as a servicemember has an awareness, he or she then has 1 year before ETS or 2 years before retirement to go back and use resources and DOD like the military apprenticeship program, to get those credentialing and certifications.

As we move to transform TAP this year, we want to bring awareness of all of those apprenticeship programs into that.

Chairman MURRAY. I think the testimony that Mr. Smith talked about was the fact that he went through the TAP program. Grant it, it is the old one.

Mr. JEFFERSON. Yes.

Chairman MURRAY. You are talking about a new one; I understand that. But then he went and deployed to Iraq. Life changed and he came back and whatever he heard was different.

Mr. JEFFERSON. Yes, and that is why I have a few things. Number 1, servicemembers can go through TAP a second time. Two, we are going to have an e-learning platform. Three, when they finish TAP, each servicemember for the first time ever is going to have an individual transition plan followed by 60 days of post-TAP support where they——

Chairman MURRAY. Mandatory? Is it going to be mandatory?

Mr. JEFFERSON. I will defer to DOD for that, but I will say this. I believe every servicemember will benefit through going through the new Transition Assistance Program the way we are revamping it.

Chairman MURRAY. OK. Senator Burr?

Senator BURR. I am going to ask a simple question. We have had some tough ones. Who should be held responsible for the pitiful placement of our country's veterans, which agency? Who is in charge?

Mr. JEFFERSON. Sir, I will step up and take responsibility for serving as a focal point for veterans employment. When I came

here 18 months by confirmation hearing, I made a variety of promises about things that we would do to prepare, provide and protect.

Senator BURR. Is it statutorily the Department of Labor's responsibility?

Mr. JEFFERSON. We have the congressional mandate for veterans employment as the lead agency in the Federal Government.

Senator BURR. My question would be this. Why aren't you driving all aspects of employment of veterans within OPM, within VA, within everywhere else? Why is everybody sort of creating their own little world that they deal in?

Mr. JEFFERSON. Sir, I would offer that if we look at what has actually happened over the last year, there has been more integration and collaboration than ever before. Let me share two quick examples.

For the Federal Hiring Initiative, Director Berry, myself, and VA have been doing that. For the TAP transformation, with the e-learning platform, that is a VA—that is a DOD/Labor collaboration like never before. For the new approach to employer outreach, that is vets, ESG, all out of DOD, as well as the private sector via the U.S. Chamber. So we are working to change long-standing problems.

I welcome the assistance of yourself, sir, and your staffs, but we are making progress. I am trying to get it all done yesterday. It does take some time to change.

Senator BURR. Will the new TAP program have performance measures——

Mr. JEFFERSON. Yes, sir.

Senator BURR [continuing]. That look at employment outcomes?

Mr. JEFFERSON. Sir, we are going to have performance metrics at three moments of truth, one when——

Senator BURR. If we still have programs out there that do not have performance measures today, why have we continued them for the last year and a half? Why does it take a GAO report that tells us about the duplication, the number of agencies that are involved, the lack of coordination that exists; why are they still in existence?

Mr. JEFFERSON. Sir, I began the TAP transformation process on day one. I cannot comment as to what happened before I was there. I also know that we have 160——

Senator BURR. What do you say to the GAO report that—let me just pull up their quote.

Mr. JEFFERSON. Yes, sir.

Senator BURR. GAO noted, "overlap among federally-funded employment and training programs raise questions about the efficiency and effective use of the resources and program overlap might hinder people from seeking assistance and frustrated employers and program administrators."

Now, did you disagree with their assessment?

Mr. JEFFERSON. Sir, that was one of the reasons why I am trying to push forward so hard. We need a program in place for those 160,000 servicemembers who are getting out until the new program is in effect. But we are also partnering, as an example, with DOD Army forming a TAP/ACAP partnership, so for the first time ever,

a servicemember in the Army will go through TAP and then transition into the ACAP program.

We are also partnering with the Military Spouse Employment Program that has got jobs for 90,000 spouses. That has never been done before.

Senator BURR. Let me ask you, Mr. Campbell, is it possible before an active duty servicemember separates, at the post that they separate from, could we have them take the certification examination for that State for whatever technical skill they have worked in the military?

Mr. CAMPBELL. I don't see any reason why we couldn't.

Senator BURR. I don't either, and I know the military cannot do a certification. The military, I believe, could and should list the expansive experience that a separated member has. But maybe if we could have them take the certification exam, we have put them a little further down the road.

Mr. CAMPBELL. Yes, sir. I would just say that Secretary Jefferson talked about the new TAP. In terms of TAP—the virtual TAP that DOD is rolling out for pre-separation counseling piece of it which is congressionally mandated—we will have the capability to have that kind of testing on the site so that service men and women who are interested in the certification of whatever the mandated—or whatever level of interest they have in a particular skill set, they could take the exam right there.

Senator BURR. Would it surprise any of you that a corpsman, 5 years of experience?——

Mr. CAMPBELL. Yes, sir.

Senator BURR. Ten years of experience——

Mr. CAMPBELL. I mean, I was——

Senator BURR [continuing]. Separate from the military and could not be hired at Womack Hospital in Fayetteville, at Fort Bragg?

Mr. CAMPBELL. Sir, I was a platoon commander in Vietnam. I mean, I know what corpsmen can do, and it's very surprising and disappointing that this is the case.

Senator BURR. I mean, this is within the DOD family.

Mr. CAMPBELL. Yes, sir.

Senator BURR. That there is not a mechanism that allows the experience derived over 5–10 years in the military to even put them in line for consideration of an equivalent job at a military hospital. There is something wrong here. This is not difficult.

I think what Mr. Jefferson is attempting to do is much more difficult. And I might say to you, Mr. Berry, truthfully, we will never be able to employ enough veterans, given the budget situation in the U.S. Government, that it will make a dent in the mass of 27 percent unemployment. I applaud you for the effort. I applaud the administration for focusing government attention on this.

I wish we could focus as much on the inability of Federal agencies when those individuals are called up for active duty to actually follow the rules that we have in place for every private sector employer, because it was the Federal agencies that flunked that side of it, continue to do it today, and it is agency by agency.

So let me assure you, the model of the way forward is not to replicate what we have been doing. It is to actually listen to what these veterans said. They did not bring up tough issues. A transi-

tion program. Clearly the one at DOD they have assessed does not work or they did not know it existed, because in every case, all four said you know what, we need a transition program before we get out.

Two, resumes, I mean there is the first thing that the private sector looks at if you are really serious—and I applaud you for putting it into the TAP program. Geez, why wasn't it there before? These are not revelations that have just popped up. These are elementary to employment opportunities regardless of whether you are a servicemember or a graduate out of high school.

How many vets do you intend to hire in the Federal Government; what is the target?

Mr. BERRY. Well, what we have done, sir, is the point of this——

Senator BURR. What is the number?

Mr. BERRY. Well, I can give you—what we have done, sir, is create a percentage model, and it is based on each agency's performance. So we have come up with a unique metric on this, which I think you will be impressed with.

If you are already hiring between 20 and 25 percent, all right, if you are already in the good camp, we are asking you to do a little bit more, do a 1 or 2 percent increase. But if you are below 10 percent, we are asking you to do a 5 to 6 percent increase. If you are in the middle, if you are between 10 and 20, we are asking you to do a 3 and 4 percent increase.

Senator BURR. What is that number?

Mr. BERRY. I will work out the totals. I have not worked out the totals. But what that does is it gives—and I can tell you each agency now has a specific goal to which they are being held accountable. Each goal is significantly more than what it was the year before, so even though last year—you know, we did not have enough months in the year to do that metric. What we did was we told everybody do better, and we did better.

We did 2,000 more vets better. We did 2,700 more disabled vets better.

This will—I believe this will keep that going and that trajectory going, sir.

Senator BURR. I applaud you for that increase.

I want to repeat something that you said and I am paraphrasing, so you correct me if I was wrong. You said we got a new program and we are going to hire separated servicemembers at an entry-level position. You said, I cannot remember the grade.

Mr. BERRY. A GS–3, 4, or 5.

Senator BURR. GS–3, 4, or 5, to get the education and the certification needed to make a career. Now, I just ask you to pause for a second and think about the testimony that you heard in the last panel. That was not what they were asking for. They were asking to apply their experience into a certification because they had a very difficult time going back to acquire the education needed to fit within the system we designed.

I can understand how this is sort of moving the goalpost is something that the Federal Government is doing positively. But to me, having just heard the witnesses testify, I have to think if they are still here, they are sitting out there saying, did they listen?

Our problem is not creating new programs. It should be reforming some and again, I applaud you for TAP. Our problem today is putting veterans in a job. It is enabling them to get a paycheck and to feel the worth of the service that they committed to and the opportunity that they want to have from thereon out. If not, quite honestly, none of you are responsible for the next part. It falls in our laps in this Committee. It is veterans homelessness. It is substance abuse. It is all the things we know we are going to run into if in fact we have not provided them one simple thing, the means to take care of their family and themselves, and that is a paycheck.

So as elaborate as some of the things sound as they are described, my only recommendation to each one of you is make this simple. If we have not gotten something simple, we will not have the level of participation to drive down a 27 percent unemployment rate in the veterans community, no matter how creative the private sector is, whether it is Military.com or whether it is the Initiative for Green Jobs for Vets, we are not going to make a dent in this if in fact we cannot get everybody on the pathway of having the simple things that these guys have described for us, resumes, a transition program that is understandable, a pathway to certification.

I will be honest with you; I would love to hire one of the electricians coming out of the military. It would probably be a hell of a lot more reasonable cost.

[Laughter.]

Mr. BERRY. They are well trained, well trained.

Senator BURR. So how can we all admit how well trained they are, and the only thing that separates them from where they are today and a job is a certificate saying that they have 15 years as an electrician? Something is crazy wrong with this. I am not sure that any of the things I have heard today is going to solve that little simple piece.

I would ask you, Ray, to figure out what Department of Labor can do.

Mr. JEFFERSON. Yes, sir.

Senator BURR. To find that level of agreement between the Federal Government, between the military, between the States, between localities that says, you know what, we can all agree on some fast-track certification. If you have X amount of years of experience, whether it is driving a truck or stringing wire, with a simple 30-day refresher course, you can take an exam and if you pass, you get your certification. If you don't, then you go through the laborious process of going back to school.

I am going to tell you, for most of these kids, there is a reason they went in the military over and above serving their country. It was because they were tired of education. Education was not the centerpiece of their life. They had gotten it up to here.

Now if they are career, they are getting a lot of education while they are in the military, but the education that the young ones are getting, they do not realize it. We are spending a lot of money to make them proficient on some of the world's greatest technology, and it is just a shame that we are not tapping into that investment that we make.

The Chair has been very gracious to me. Once again, I want to applaud you for what each one of you in your departments and agencies do every day, but I also want you to leave understanding we have not solved this problem yet.

We have a long way to go. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Senator TESTER [presiding]. Thanks, Senator Burr. I am going to start with you, Director Berry.

During Eric Smith's testimony you were obviously paying attention. The only thing I would say is if one Eric Smith is in this position, gosh knows how many more are out there. This one is a slam dunk, from my point of view anyway; so anything you can do in that particular area throughout the military is critically important.

Mr. Campbell, there was a question that the Chairman asked of you that the gentleman behind you, you originally said you could certify and the gentleman behind you said no, you cannot. I understand that. I have staff too that tell me what to say. The question is, and if you cannot answer this now, we can certainly get it in writing, but why can't the military certify the jobs that the people in the military have done? Is there some rule or regulation stopping it from doing that?

Mr. CAMPBELL. I will have to take that for the record, Senator.

Senator TESTER. I would love to know that because there is nobody that knows what the soldier is doing in the field any better than the people that are serving with him and that is the military.

For them not to be able to certify, I think unless you can tell me a reason why not, that is a major, major problem.

Assistant Secretary Jefferson, it is always good to see you. I appreciate the work all of you do.

When we talk about TAP, and we talk about revamping TAP so it meets the needs of the soldiers, whether it is done before they are deployed or whether it is done after they are deployed, one of the strengths that you bring to this job, from my opinion having never served, one of strengths that you bring is that you have served and that you have sacrificed and that you know the mindset going in and you know the mindset coming off.

I think that is a critically important perspective to have when you are setting up these programs.

Mr. JEFFERSON. Yes, sir.

Senator TESTER. You know—I mean, any teacher knows there is an opportunity to get through at a certain moment in time and if you do not take advantage of that moment in time, it is gone, and if you are doing it before or you are doing it after is not nearly as effective.

So all I would ask you to do—this is just a statement—is when you are advising programs, put yourself back as that 18-year-old or 20-year-old kid that you were, young man that you were when you went in and before you got deployed and say, all right, would this have worked, you know——

Mr. JEFFERSON. For me.

Senator TESTER. Yeah. That is all. Because that is one of your skill sets that I think is critically important to bring to the table.

Mr. JEFFERSON. Thank you, sir.

Senator TESTER. I have to ask a question about the outreach, the pilot program you talked about, and we did get a response back

and it was because of budgetary reasons that you have not been able to expand that program. I understand that.

Mr. JEFFERSON. Sir, did you get the update on that as well?

Senator TESTER. Go ahead.

Mr. JEFFERSON. One of the resources, on a loan to expand that into phase two, six States, as we had hoped to do, but I am trying to see if we can bring an interagency innovation, in fact the collaboration together to allow it to continue. It is very effective, as you know.

Senator TESTER. Yeah.

Mr. JEFFERSON. So I am working on that right now to see if we can maybe bring some other partners in, give us some additional capacity.

Senator TESTER. Have you been able to put any numbers together at this period—it is pretty early in this program—as to numbers of dollars invested versus number of dollars back?

Mr. JEFFERSON. Yes, sir. It is very minimal.

We are only paying for phone charges, mailings. It is $140,000.

Senator TESTER. Yeah, and have you been able to do any cost benefit analysis on that as to what is being returned with the money that you spent?

Mr. JEFFERSON. Oh, yes, sir. We have about 90 percent participation. That is about—over 4,000 veterans right now are in the program. Some want employment access and services. Some want health, some want education.

We have over 26 percent wanting employment, 818 have enrolled in a formal course and we have gotten jobs for 23 already. Now, we believe that a lot more than 23 have found jobs, but we have that lacking indicator. So the feedback from the veterans is this is a big hit.

Senator TESTER. We have talked about American Indians. They have a high rate of enlist——

Mr. JEFFERSON. Yes, sir.

Senator TESTER. They also have an incredibly high rate of unemployment in the State of Montana. I only speak for that because that is what I know. It may be the same around the country; I do not know that.

Is there anything we can do to reach those folks? Is there anything you are able to do to reach the folks in Indian country that—I mean, it makes 27 percent look like full employment. That is the kind of numbers we are talking.

Mr. JEFFERSON. Yes, sir. Sir, Secretary Solis and the Department of Labor have a particular commitment to the Native American community. We have brought Native American leaders into the department to look at how we can better serve them. I have asked my State directors to go above and beyond what they have been doing before to get our 2,000 employee representatives on the ground. I would welcome the continued dialog with your office, and I am hopeful that we can find a way to expand this because, as you know, many Native American Indians are also living in rural America.

Senator TESTER. Last question, and I am going to turn to Senator Boozman. It can be for any of the three of you. There are a

wide variety of veterans jobs programs out there. I cannot help to think that there is not a lot of overlap.

Mr. JEFFERSON. Yes, sir.

Senator TESTER. We are in tough budgetary times. Is anybody doing an analysis? I know it means giving up turf on some people's parts and taking turf on other people's parts. Is anybody doing an analysis on overlap and how we can be more efficient and more effective?

Quite frankly, from my perspective, the less overlap you have, the more efficient the program, the more effective it is too. Is anybody doing any analysis on that?

Mr. JEFFERSON. Sir, I would—if I may substitute the word "action" for analysis, we have been stepping into this, going over to DOD, working with John Campbell's shop, the ESGR executive director, the veterans employment folks over at the Army G–1's office, bringing them together with the U.S. Chamber, reaching out to the Society for Human Resource Management as well, to look at how we can collaborate more effectively.

The 100 mega hiring fairs are an example of that. We are also going to be working to create a toolkit for employers on how to find onboard and assimilate veterans.

Senator TESTER. One of the things that the President has talked about in every program is that you cut down the silos, you work across alliances, reduce duplication, and you become more efficient. And you set aside your egos to do it. I would just encourage you to do it in this particular case. I think it reduces confusion in a big way.

Senator Boozman?

Senator BOOZMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you all for being here. We really do appreciate your hard work.

Mr. Jefferson, what percentage of people go through TAP?

Mr. JEFFERSON. Sir, we have about 160,000 to 165,000 servicemembers who leave the service every year. We capture about 80 percent of them every year. Last year we served 134,000 servicemembers. That included 2,500 spouses.

Senator BOOZMAN. You and I agree that it is very important to go through that program, but the reality is, the DOD has a lot to do with whether or not an individual actually goes through it——

Mr. JEFFERSON. Yes, sir.

Senator BOOZMAN [continuing]. With allowing them the time to do that. So something that we might consider doing, Mr. Chairman, is I would really like—and I will visit with—but I think at some point we really need to have DOD in the room with these folks in the sense of again, like with the TAP program, I mean, that is a joint effort.

Mr. JEFFERSON. Yes.

Senator BOOZMAN. I would very much like to see it as 100 percent. I know you would.

Mr. JEFFERSON. Yes, sir.

Senator BOOZMAN. But we need to figure out where the 20 percent is getting by.

Mr. JEFFERSON. Yes.

Senator BOOZMAN. I apologize for not being here earlier. I missed the earlier discussion, but I really feel like that the TAP needs to be done early.

Mr. JEFFERSON. Yes, sir.

Senator BOOZMAN. We need to get rid of the stigma of going through it because I have had the opportunity to go and actually hear some of the old program, which was actually pretty good, in the sense that so many of those individuals do not realize the benefits that they are getting. I mean, they do not realize how much health care is going to cost them in the future and all of these different things, which they have to plan for.

You cannot do that in a very short period of time. So we do need to get that sorted out.

Senator TESTER. Senator Boozman, just so you know, Mr. Campbell is from DOD.

Senator BOOZMAN. OK, I'm sorry.

Mr. CAMPBELL. Senator, that is OK.

Senator BOOZMAN. Well, again, the——

Mr. CAMPBELL. Let me just say that there is one piece of the entire TAP process, which is pre-separation counseling, which is DOD, congressionally mandated. Within the four services, the Marines make it mandatory. Air Force——

Senator BOOZMAN. So what has happened with the 20 percent? I really am late getting here in that sense, but tell me what has happened with the 20 percent slippage.

Mr. CAMPBELL. Well, we got——

Senator BOOZMAN. It serves one out of five.

Mr. CAMPBELL [continuing]. A service or two that does not make it mandatory, so it is really up to the servicemember whether he or she wants to take it. There is——

Senator BOOZMAN. So is it merely that, or is it more just guys being—again, we have all the deployments going on. It is tough out there. Is it that they do not want to take it or is it just the numbers are so tight?

Mr. CAMPBELL. I will be honest, Senator, I think they want to take it. Whether they think it is valuable or not, that is a question. Both Secretary Jefferson and I are both working hard at trying to make sure that the new TAP process is really going to be valuable to them and in a medium that they understand, the web. So we are working on that.

Senator BOOZMAN. In regard to the certification, I think that is really important. The appropriate time to do that would be if a young man or woman has completed truck driving school in the military; that would be the time to take the certification course.

I do not care who you are, I am an optometrist and practiced for 24 years and I was pretty good at what I did when I left, but I could not have passed a test, you know, at that point, and truly, getting squared away. So that would be the time to do it, so we do need cooperation there.

The other differences, there is a difference in certification and licensure and our States determine licensure, so you have to figure out that component of it also.

But one of the blowbacks that we have had in the past is that DOD, I think, has felt like if you do those kind of things, then you

are going to lose force. You know, at the conclusion of training and they have this certification which can lead to licensure, then that is really not that great of thing in the sense that some of these people will have the option then of getting out and going into the—so that is another area I think that we have to break down and see if that really is a problem.

The other thing is, can you all comment on what effect are the frequent deployments having on employment?

Mr. JEFFERSON. Sure. So as we hear from employers, they are doing overall a tremendous job of supporting servicemembers and their families. The First Lady yesterday——

Senator BOOZMAN. I understand that. I do not mean to interrupt. He is going to cut me off.

Mr. JEFFERSON. OK.

Senator BOOZMAN. I understand. Our employers are doing a tremendous job. On the other hand, if you have—if you are from a small town, which many of these individuals are, and you are a small business and you have five employees, and you have had the experience that you are going to lose one of these guys and what do you do, because they are going to obey the law, they are going to take them back, but that really does leave you in a bind. Is that having a significant effect on employment?

Mr. JEFFERSON. It is having an effect, sir, on the small businesses. Obviously, we have the annual ceremony, the Freedom Awards, for the Guard and Reserve, and those businesses, which I personally often find the most inspiring, are those small ones who still strive to take care and honor their employment rights in the face of a repeated deployments where they have very small staffs. So that is a challenge, sir. I just have to acknowledge that very openly.

Senator BOOZMAN. One last thing, with your indulgence. You mention that we need to measure and more.

Mr. JEFFERSON. Yes, sir.

Senator BOOZMAN. We need metrics. What do you all feel is important to measure?

Mr. JEFFERSON. Three things, sir. The first is with this TAP—let me talk about the TAP program first. When a servicemember finishes the program, right then, where they can get their feedback and assess how useful they found the program, thumbs up, thumbs down, because that is what they are going to go back to their units and tell their colleagues, their partners.

Number 2, when they are applying the content, which is if they go to TAP 1 year before ETS or 2 years before retirement, there may be a period of time in which they deploy before they apply the content. So that is the second moment of truth where we get performance metrics.

The third is when they have actually found a job. How helpful are we at helping them to quickly assimilate into a new culture on board and become a contributor?

So those are the three metrics, the three moments of truth, that we are going to track with the new TAP program.

Senator BOOZMAN. One other thing is I wish we had some ability to be a little bit more flexible. A number of the people, we actually visited with them after they got through doing the TAP. It was

amazing the percentage of people that were going into franchises, things like that, and it would be so nice and we tried—we explored the possibility of maybe breaking off the education component of the franchise fee——

Mr. JEFFERSON. Yes, sir.

Senator BOOZMAN [continuing]. And allowing them to get credit in that manner versus——

Mr. JEFFERSON. Can I comment on that for a second, sir? Sir, the new TAP would be a primary portal for entrepreneurship programs, services, support, and I will use their phrase "inspiration." So we are building all of that into the new TAP. We are also partnering with SBA and an interagency task force to bring all that content into the new TAP.

So a servicemember may want to do something similar to what they did in the military, or very different, or become an entrepreneur and start his or her own company.

Senator BOOZMAN. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Mr. Campbell, for being here.

Senator TESTER. I want to thank the first panel and this panel. I appreciate taking your time to be here to testify in front of the Veterans' Affairs Committee.

We are adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 12:05 p.m., the Committee was adjourned.]

A P P E N D I X

Statement for
the Record

Reserve Officers Association of the United States
And
Reserve Enlisted Association

for the

Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee

April 13, 2011

"Serving Citizen Warriors through Advocacy and Education since 1922."™

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The Reserve Officers Association of the United States (ROA) is a professional association of commissioned and warrant officers of our nation's seven uniformed services, and their spouses. ROA was founded in 1922 during the drawdown years following the end of World War I. It was formed as a permanent institution dedicated to National Defense, with a goal to teach America about the dangers of unpreparedness. When chartered by Congress in 1950, the act established the objective of ROA to: "...support and promote the development and execution of a military policy for the United States that will provide adequate National Security." The mission of ROA is to advocate strong Reserve Components and national security, and to support Reserve officers in their military and civilian lives.

The Association's 60,000 members include Reserve and Guard Soldiers, Sailors, Marines, Airmen, and Coast Guardsmen who frequently serve on Active Duty to meet critical needs of the uniformed services and their families. ROA's membership also includes officers from the U.S. Public Health Service and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration who often are first responders during national disasters and help prepare for homeland security. ROA is represented in each state with 55 departments plus departments in Latin America, the District of Columbia, Europe, the Far East, and Puerto Rico. Each department has several chapters throughout the state. ROA has more than 450 chapters worldwide.

ROA is a member of The Military Coalition where it co-chairs the Tax and Social Security Committee. ROA is also a member of the National Military/Veterans Alliance. Overall, ROA works with 75 military, veterans and family support organizations.

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The Reserve Enlisted Association is an advocate for the enlisted men and women of the United States Military Reserve Components in support of National Security and Homeland Defense, with emphasis on the readiness, training, and quality of life issues affecting their welfare and that of their families and survivors. REA is the only Joint Reserve association representing enlisted reservists – all ranks from all five branches of the military.

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DISCLOSURE OF FEDERAL GRANTS OR CONTRACTS

The Reserve Officers and Reserve Enlisted Associations are member-supported organizations. Neither ROA nor REA have received grants, sub-grants, contracts, or subcontracts from the federal government in the past three years. All other activities and services of the associations are accomplished free of any direct federal funding.

INTRODUCTION

On behalf of our members, the Reserve Officers and the Reserve Enlisted Associations thank the committee for the opportunity to submit testimony on veteran and National Guard and Reserve employment issues. ROA and REA applaud the ongoing efforts by Congress to address employment problems faced by so many veterans and service members.

As contingency operations continue with increased mobilizations and deployments, many of these outstanding citizen soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines, and Coast Guardsmen have put their civilian careers on hold while they serve their country in harm's way. As we have learned, they share the same risks and their counterparts in the Active Components. In just this past month we passed the 800,000 mark for the number of Reserve and Guard service members who have been activated since post-9/11. More than 275,000 have been mobilized two or more times. The United States is creating a new generation of combat veterans that come from its Reserve Components (RC). It is important, therefore, that we don't squander this valuable resource of experience, nor ignore the benefits that they are entitled to because of their selfless service to their country.

ROA would like to thank the committee and staff for making improvements to the Post 9/11 GI Bill, enhancing benefits for caregivers, and much more.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Employment issues supported by the Reserve Officers and Reserve Enlisted Associations are as follows:

Education:

- Include Title 14 duty in eligibility for the Post 9/11 GI Bill.
- Exempt earned benefit from GI Bill from being consider income in need based aid calculations
- Develop a standard nation-wide payment system for private schools
- Re-examine qualification basis for yellow ribbon program, rather than first come first serve.
- Increase MGIB-Selected Reserve (MGIB-SR) to 47 percent of MGIB-Active.
- Include 4-year reenlistment contracts to qualify for MGIB-SR.
- Enact Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) and Service members Civil Relief Act (SCRA) protections for mobilized Guard-Reserve students to adjust interest rates on federal student loans of mobilized Reservists when the market rate drops below 6 percent.

Employer Support:

- Continue to enact tax credits for health care and differential pay expenses for deployed Reserve Component employees.
- Provide tax credits to offset costs for temporary replacements of deployed Reserve Component employees.
- Support tax credits to employers who hire service members who supported contingency operations.

Employee Support:

- Permit delays or exemptions while mobilized of regularly scheduled mandatory continuing education and licensing /certification/promotion exams.
- Continue to support a law center dedicated to USERRA/SCRA problems of deployed Active and Reserve service members.

Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) / Servicemembers' Civil Relief Act (SCRA):

- Improve SCRA to protect deployed members from creditors that willfully violate SCRA.
- Fix USERRA/SCRA to protect health care coverage of returning service members and family for pre-existing conditions, and continuation of prior group or individual insurance.
- Enact USERRA protections for employees who require regularly scheduled mandatory continuing education and licensing/certification and make necessary changes to USERRA to strengthen employment and reemployment protections.
- Exempt Reserve Component members from federal law enforcement retirement application age restrictions when deployment interferes in completing the application to buy back retirement eligibility.
- Amend SCRA to prohibit courts from modifying previous judgments that change the custody arrangements for a child of a deployed service member.
- Encourage Federal agencies to abide by USERRA/SCRA standards.
- Ensure USERRA isn't superseded by binding arbitrations agreements between employers and Reserve Component members.
- Make the states employers waive 11th Amendment immunity with respect to USERRA claims, as a condition of receipt of federal assistance.
- Make the award of attorney fees mandatory rather than discretionary.

Veterans Affairs:

- Extend veterans preference to those Reserve Component members who have completed 20 years in good standing, or
- Permit any member who has served under honorable conditions and has received a DD-214 to qualify for veteran status.

←→

Only issues needing additional explanation are included below. ROA and REA can provide further information if requested.

EDUCATION

Post 9/11 GI Bill

ROA and REA are grateful for passage of the Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Improvements Act of 2010.

Although there is still room for more improvement which can in the long run make the program more effective and increase utilization. For example, while Title 32 AGR was included for eligibility while Title 14 Coast Guard Reserve was left out.

Other issues that student veterans have raised to ROA in which we recommend include the following:

- Require timely application and submission of documentation by the institution to the Department of Veterans' Affairs (VA) and vice versa.
- Establish dedicated and well-trained officers for student veterans to speak with via the call center.
- Better define the Yellow Ribbon Program to determine what 'first come, first serve' means in context of institutions (such as registration time, enrollment, and official enrollment).

- Allow institutions to give more funds to students with stronger merit and need-base under the Yellow Ribbon Program.
- Align the VA's work-study program for students to work as guidance officers at their institutions to aid other student veterans, to be matched up with institution's academic calendar.
- Safeguard and implement a long term plan for sustaining the Post 9/11 GI Bill.
    - Ensure transferability benefits are protected.
    - Guarantee that any future changes to the program that could have negative effects on benefits will grandfather in current beneficiaries.
- Pass legislation to disallow institutions including benefits in need-based aid formulations.
    - Remove the requirement to have a parental signature.
    - Establish parity between FAFSA disclosure exclusion over veterans' educational and non-educational benefits to CSS and all institutions of higher learning.

Institutions of higher learning across the nation that provide need-based aid often require students to file a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form and a College Scholarship Service/Financial Aid Profile (CSS) form administered by the College Board.

If an institution abides by the federal methodology of determining aid levels it uses the FAFSA form and guidelines, but an institution may use an institution methodology (IM) formulated by CSS. By law under the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 1965 (HEA), FAFSA's current need analysis formula, while including some sources of untaxed income, excludes veteran's educational benefits and welfare benefits.

On the other hand, CSS require military service members to disclose their earned educational benefits for the formulation of their need-based aid levels. That disclosure of veterans' educational benefits on the CSS is then often weighed by those institutions that use an IM in the same manner of other traditional untaxed income items such as child support or a contribution from a relative, in the formulation of their aid package.

Disclosing these earned-benefits on the CSS profile serves to bring down service members' financial need level, thus increasing the cost out of pocket, by improperly treating earned benefits as equivalent in nature and function as untaxed income items. Since CSS is not restricted from asking for disclosure of the benefits, institutions use the CSS to add these earned benefits into the aid formulation, shirking FAFSA's and the HEA's intentions.

ROA and REA urge Congress to bar institutions of higher learning from considering veterans' educational benefits in need-based aid calculations and apply the Higher Education Opportunity Act to all financial aid practices of institutions of higher learning.

ROA and REA recommend enacting the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) and Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (SCRA) protections for mobilized Guard and Reserve students granting academic leave of absences, protecting academic standing and refund guarantees.

Also ROA and REA encourages the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee to cosponsor Sen. Chuck Schumer's bill S.745 that would grandfather in current students who applied for benefits of the Post 9/11 GI Bill under a different set of rules. While many may gain advantages under the changes in law, others are actually negatively affected. For example ROA has received concerning calls and emails from members that feel forsaken as such members signed commitments based on the benefits which they now feel are reduced.

Furthermore ROA and REA are troubled by a recent change to the Department of Veterans Affairs' GI Bill website. According to the eligibility for the Yellow Ribbon Program on the VA website (www.gibill.va.gov/benefits/post_911_gibill/yellow_ribbon_program.html) as of now "Active duty servicemembers and their spouses are not eligible for this program (child transferees of active duty servicemembers may be eligible if the servicemember is qualified at the 100% rate)." Yet prior to changes in law in December the website used the term 'individuals' and 'based on service requirements'. What's more according to U.S. Code, Title 38, section 3317 "The program shall only apply to covered individuals described in paragraphs (1) and (2) of section 3311 (b)." Furthermore Section 3311 (b) speaks to covered individuals that are after completion of service required in subparagraph (A) to include "*(i) continues on active duty.*"

ROA and REA urge Congress to ascertain from the VA as to why this eligibility was changed and to correct the error.

One of the most significant problems that link all issues pertaining to the Post 9/11 GI Bill is the lack of effectively trained customer service representatives. One of the many examples came from two of our members that are married, both serving in a Reserve Component. They wanted to transfer their benefits to their children, but were told that only one parent can register the children in the DEERS system and therefore only one of the parents could transfer the benefits. After going through a couple back channels ROA found out that the couple needed to go to a DEERS office and request an 'administrative' account for the purposes of transferring benefits.

There are many stories similar to this one which causes unnecessary stress on the families, some of whom give into the system and give up the benefit because either they are given incorrect and/or incomplete information or the hassles involved are not deemed worthwhile.

It is absolutely necessary that our service members, veterans and families have the ability to access accurate and timely information. **ROA and REA urge Congress to enforce the VA to properly and effectively train their personnel.**

Montgomery GI Bill

To assist in recruiting efforts for the Marine Corps Reserve and the other uniformed services, ROA and REA urge Congress to reduce the obligation period to qualify for Montgomery "GI" Bill-Selected Reserve (MGIB-SR) (Section 1606) from six years in the Selected Reserve to four years in the Selected Reserve plus four years in the Individual Ready Reserve, thereby remaining a mobilization asset for eight years.

Because of funding constraints, no Reserve Component member will be guaranteed a full career without some period in a non-pay status. BRAC realignments are also restructuring the RC force and reducing available paid billets. Whether attached to a volunteer unit or as an individual mobilization augmentee, this status represents periods of drilling without pay. MGIB-SR eligibility should extend for 10 years beyond separation or transfer from a paid billet.

EMPLOYMENT

Employment Protections

Veterans and service members are provided protections through the National Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR), the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA), and the Servicemembers' Civil Relief Act (SCRA).

Notwithstanding the protections afforded veterans and service members, and antidiscrimination laws it is not unusual for members to lose their jobs due to time spent away while deployed. Sometimes this is by employers who go out of business, but more because it costs employers money, time, and effort to reintroduce the employee to the company.

The most recent national example is in the case of *Straub vs. Proctor Hospital* in which Army Reservist Vincent Straub was fired by Proctor Hospital of Peoria due to his service requirements. The Supreme Court upheld Straub's rights under USERRA.

Furthermore while the national unemployment rate may actually be reducing incrementally, the unemployment rate of veterans, Guardsmen and Reservists is actually increasing with an average of 15.2 percent. In some units it has been reported to range from 25 to 45 percent unemployment.

Employer Incentives

Partnerships: The Army Reserve under Lieutenant General Jack Stultz initiated the Employer Partnership Program with civilian employers that is an initiative designed to formalize the relationship between the Reserve and the private sector, sharing common goals of strengthening the community, supporting RC service members and families, and maintaining a strong economy. Over 1,000 companies are currently in various preliminary stages of implementing partnership programs. This sets a model for businesses to hire veterans. The program has its own website http://www.employerpartnership.org/ and provides job search, a resume builder, professional staff support, a list of employer partners and career resources.

Periodic and Predictable: Employers need increased notification time in order to better support their personnel. The military services and components should provide greater notice of deployments to employees, so that they, as well as RC members and their families, can better prepare. Collaboration between industry and the military needs to occur as the military considers deployment cycle models so that the nation's defense needs are met but its industrial base is not compromised.

Employer care plans should be developed that will assist with mitigation strategies for dealing with the civilian workload during the absence of the service member employee and lay out how the employer and employee would remain in contact throughout the deployment.

CNGR: The Commission on the National Guard and Reserve suggested key recommendations included expansion of the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve committee to be able to work new employment as well as reemployment opportunities, the creation of an employer advisory council, and regular surveys to determine employer interests and concerns over reemployment of Guard and Reserve members.

TRICARE as an employee/employer benefit: An employer incentive is when an employee brings importable health care such as TRICARE, reducing the costs for the employer. Guard and Reserve members as well as military retirees should be permitted to tout the availability of TRICARE as an employee asset, and permit employers to provide alternative benefits in lieu of health care.

Another option is to fully or partially offsetting employer costs for health care payments for Guard and Reserve members who are employed, especially when companies continue civilian health insurance for service members and or their families during a deployment. Provide employers – especially small businesses – with incentives such as cash stipends to help pay for health care for Reservists up to the amount DoD is contributing. When a member is deployed, the payments could increase to the value of active military health care to allow the RC employee and family to remain on the employers insurance, with the understanding of reemployment guarantees upon the serving members return.

Other incentives: Incentives of various types would serve to mitigate burdens and encourage business to both hire and retain Reservists and veterans. A variety of tax credits could be enacted providing such credit at the beginning of a period of mobilization or perhaps even a direct subsidy for costs related to a mobilization such as the hiring and training of new employees. Employers felt strongly that, especially for small businesses, incentives that arrive at the end of the tax year do not mitigate the costs incurred during the deployment period. Also cross-licensing/credentialing would ease the burden of having to acquire new licenses/credentials in the private sector after having gained them during their military service, and vice versa.

While not under these committee jurisdictions we hope that the Veterans Committees can support specific tax incentives to hire returning veterans and Guard and Reserve members.

ROA and REA support S.491 *Veterans Employment Transition Act of 2011* introduced by Sen. Max Baucus which would extend the work opportunity credit to certain recently discharged veterans. Though ROA and REA we would like the bill to be amended to add all Reserve Component services that have served 180 consecutive days pursuant to the bill's requirement.

ROA and REA also support S.367 *Hire a Hero Act of 2011* introduced by Sen. Scott Brown that would allow the work opportunity credit to small businesses which hire individuals who are members of the Ready Reserve or National Guard.

ROA and REA further recommend the following:

ROA encourages the implementation of certifications or a form that would inform employers of skills potential veteran and service member employees gained through their military service.

ROA supports initiatives to provide small business owners with protections for their businesses to be sustained while on deployment, for example a potential program in which a trained substitute is made available to run the business while the member is out country. Further SCRA protection on equipment leases should be included in the law.

SERVICE MEMBERS LAW CENTER

In the summer of 2009 ROA established the Service Members Law Center (SMLC) as a source of excellence in the areas of employment and consumer law for active, Guard and reserve personnel.

The Law Center's goals include the following:

- Advise Active and Reserve members who have been subject to legal problems that relate to their military service.
- Develop a network of legal scholars, law school clinics and private practitioners interested in legal issues of direct importance to service members.
- Advance world-class continuing legal education on issues relating to the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) and the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (SCRA).
- Broaden the existing database of USERRA and SCRA research.
- In conjunction with bar associations, develop standards that will help to ensure that lawyers to whom service members are referred for legal services have the requisite expertise to represent them effectively.

Recruiting and retaining members of the armed services, especially those in the National Guard and Reserves, depends in part on assuring current and future Citizen Warriors that laws and regulations are in place to protect them effectively from discriminatory practices.

The Law Center is functioning at a modest but effective level. ROA is pursuing efforts to obtain private funding and to identify public and private entities willing to sustain this effort in order to expand this service to fuller capacity.

As part of the SMLC and under director Captain Sam Wright, JAGC, USNR (Ret.) the Law Center maintains the "Law Review" data base and indices contain over 600 articles on USERRA and SCRA issues. On a monthly basis CAPT Wright receives about 500 calls from concerned service members, families and attorneys. In March 2011 about 80 percent of the calls were about USERRA.

The Law Center's services include:

- Counseling**:** Review cases, and advise individuals and their lawyers as to lawfulness of actions taken against deployed active and reserve component members.
- Referral: Provide names of attorneys within a region that have successfully taken up USERRA, SCRA and other military-related issues.
- Promote: Publish articles encouraging law firms and lawyers to represent service members in USERRA, SCRA and other military-related cases.
- Advise*:* File amicus curiae, "friend of the court" briefs on service member protection cases.
- Educate: Quarterly seminars to educate attorneys a better understanding of USERRA, SCRA and other military-related issues.

The Service Members Law Center is available at www.roa.org/Servicemembers_Law_Center.

DEFENSE EDUCATION FORUM

ROA also maintains the Defense Education Forum (DEF). DEF produces and sponsors a wide variety of educational events that number more than 30 per year. Some past programs comprise employment and transition issues. The DEF director is Lieutenant Colonel Bob Feidler, USAR (Ret.).

In fact in 2008 ROA published a report on continuum of service entitled "A New Employer-Reservist Compact: Initiatives for the Future" which is available upon request.

Others events have included continuing education on USERRA, a joint issue event on mental health care and the Army Reserve Employer Partnership Program, Commission on the National Guard and Reserve and others.

The Defense Education Forum is available at www.roa.org/Educate.

CONCLUSION

ROA and REA appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony, and we reiterate our profound gratitude for the progress achieved by these committees such as providing a GI Bill for the 21st Century and advanced funding for the VA.

ROA and REA look forward to working with the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, where we can present solutions to these and other issues, and offer our support, and hope in the future of an opportunity to discuss these issues in person.

ROA and REA encourage this Committee to utilize the Service Members Law Center and the Defense Education Forum and reports, both valuable assets, and to share it with your constituents and other Congressional members.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF ROBERT W. MADDEN, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, NATIONAL ECONOMIC COMMISSION, THE AMERICAN LEGION

Today men and women come back from combat with multiple skills and areas of expertise. These servicemembers are considered highly qualified individuals who are ready for employment. The American Legion has found is these men and women serving our country are finding it hard to take the skills that they learned from the military and translate those skills into civilian terms. In addition, servicemembers with certain specific training, such as medical care, find they do not possess the licenses and certifications from their military service that the private sector needs in order to employ them.

These disparities lead to unemployment and underemployment for transitioning servicemembers and veterans and puts them a step behind their civilian counterparts. The military invests hundreds of thousands of dollars in training its servicemembers making them highly qualified for a vast array of civilian jobs, yet these highly trained, highly skilled veterans often cannot do the same job they were prepared for in the military in the private sector. Often, this is due to a lack of recognition by the credentialing agencies and employers of the equivalency of military training, education, and experience. This failure to recognize the military acquired skills and education is a disservice to servicemembers and veterans alike and must be remedied.

EMPLOYMENT BARRIERS

The barriers that exist to ensuring that servicemembers have the civilian licenses and certifications they need for the civilian workforce are multi-faceted. A key barrier is a lack of information on the part of both servicemembers and credentialing agencies. Often servicemembers are unaware until they transition out of the service there are credentialing requirements associated with the civilian counterparts of their military jobs until they transition out of the service. At that point, it may be difficult to meet the eligibility requirements for the credential without significant delays in employment. Similarly, credentialing agencies may not be aware that military education, training, and experience are often comparable to that in the civilian sector. Military leaders should combat these informational challenges by an early dissemination of information to servicemembers on credentialing requirements during their transition process and through marketing campaigns to civilian credentialing boards to create awareness of the transferability of military skills and the quality of military education, training and experience. The American Legion also recommends that credentialing agencies develop military-specific credential requirements that recognize military training and education. For example, some universities and colleges note military training and award college credits to veterans based on the amount of training they underwent. This could apply to credentialing as well.

There are some military occupations, such as the medical care and aviation field, for which gaps between military education, training, or experience and civilian credential or job requirements can be remedied with minimal additional training or ex-

perience. However, for other military occupations, the gaps are fairly substantial and it will be difficult to get the required additional training and education in order to position a servicemember to be ready for employment once they exit the military. We allow servicemembers to fight for our freedoms and the least we should do is prepare them for employment in the private sector as part of the transitioning process.

This transitional phase of a servicemember from military to civilian live can be very unstructured and can be a stressful period. One way we can assist servicemembers is to provide a comprehensive Transition Assistance Program (TAP) during their outprocessing period from the military. A lot of criticism of the TAP program was mentioned at the Employment Roundtable last month. In order to fix this problem an overhaul of the TAP program is due. One way to improve the program is to ensure that every servicemember enters and completes the program. Making this program a mandatory part of a servicemember's transition will ensure they are leaving the military better informed and trained.

One major difficulty servicemembers have is translating their skills and experience from military lingo to civilian lingo. Countless resumes that are inaccurate or do not properly give insight into what a veteran has to offer come across my desk every day. In order to battle this conflict of translation, the TAP program should be a resource that describes the job duties of every military occupation and the equivalent civilian terminology in order to allow a servicemember to draft the best possible resume for seeking civilian employment.

With over 180,000 active duty, Reserve, and National Guard servicemembers exiting every year, TAP and other transition programs need to be formatted to give the appropriate guidance and training to all transitioning servicemembers and their families. In addition, those skills that they learn through their military training should be translated not only in language onto a resume, but servicemembers need to be given opportunities to obtain the civilian licensing and certifications that attest to their qualifications while they are in the military. The American Legion notes that appropriate Federal agencies are re-defining the TAP program, for the first time in over 17 years, which should go a long way to designing an education/employment specific level of expertise to guide servicemembers in their transition from military to civilian.

EMPLOYMENT SOLUTIONS

Public Law 111–377, Post-9/11 Veterans Education Assistance Improvements Act of 2010, affords eligible veterans with educational opportunities that will assist veterans in their transition. The Post-9/11 GI Bill allows veterans to receive their education at non-degree granting institutions, such as vocational school. This added benefit will allow those who want to capitalize on their military education and pursue a vocational/apprenticeship program leading them to jobs that do not require a traditional 2/4-year school to gain a degree, thus minimizing their time being unemployed.

The American Legion sponsored a study in the mid-1990s to understand the barriers to employment that exist for servicemembers as they exit the military, specifically as related to health care and aviation licensing and certification. That study represented the first systematic research into licensing and certification barriers and the impact they have on the ability of transitioning servicemembers and veterans to obtain employment commensurate with their skills. This continues to be a high priority for The American Legion with the upcoming National Summit that will be hosted in 2011. Unemployment is an issue which we understand, and by examining the barriers and proposing best practice solutions that we have recommended today we hope to contribute transitioning servicemembers and their families a easier pathway to employment in the civilian economy. Thank you for allowing The American Legion to submit testimony today.

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